

THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS

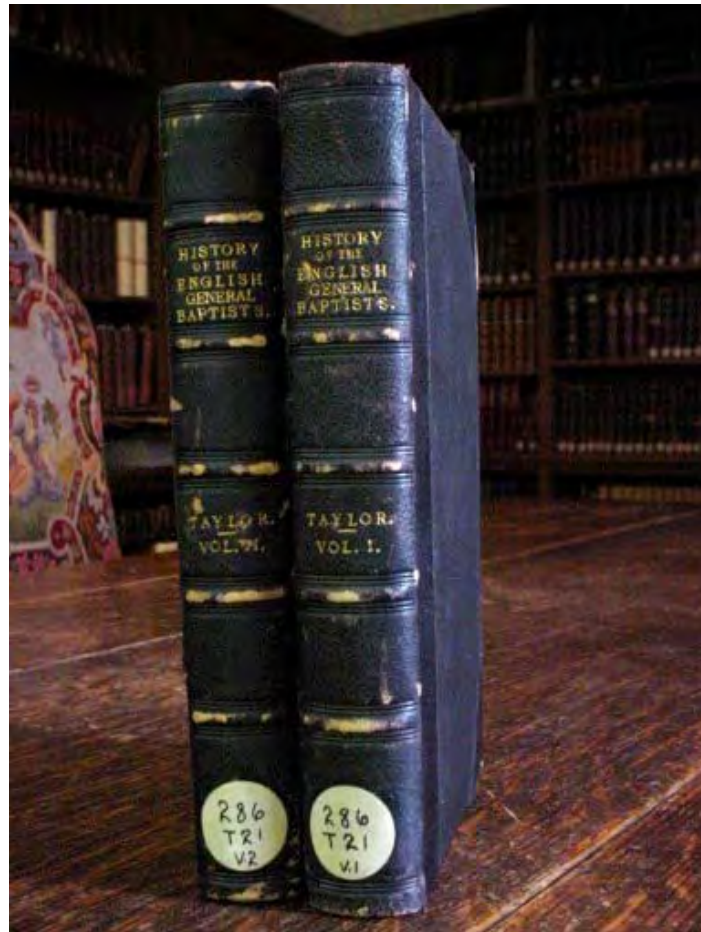
By Adam Taylor

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"Ask for the old paths." --Jeremiah.

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To the Ministers and Members of the Churches Composing The New Connection of General Baptists, This History, Undertaken at their Request, and conducted under their Patronage, is respectfully inscribed, as a Token of sincere Gratitude and cordial Esteem, by their Affectionate Brother, And Willing Servant, The Author. Shakespeare's Walk, March 3rd. 1818.

PREFACE

For many years, a wish had been frequently expressed, that the Rise and Progress of the New Connection of General Baptists should be committed to the press. The facts are instructive and interesting; and the worthy men, who had been the principal instruments in carrying forwards the good work, were daily resting from their labours. Their successors, therefore, were anxious that the particulars should be collected and secured, before the removal of all those who could best furnish information. Various attempts were made to accomplish this purpose; which failed of success. At length, the annual Association at Wisbeach, in 1812, requested the writer of the following sheets to undertake the work. This request being repeated at the next meeting of that assembly, and promises of information and support being made, he ventured to yield to their solicitations; and, through the goodness of divine Providence, and the patronage of his kind friends, has been enabled to bring the design to a conclusion.

The author has been considerably assisted, in tracing the early transactions of the General Baptists of the midland counties, by the accounts which appeared in the General Baptist Magazine, from the pen of Mr. J. Deacon; as well as by some valuable materials collected by that gentleman, and kindly handed to the writer. But his chief dependance has been on the information transmitted from the various churches. This information has been more full and particular in some cases than others: several churches sent their communications after a great part of the work was published; and a few neglected to furnish any documents. Hence, the reader will account for the more enlarged information respecting others. This too will, it is hoped, apologize for the want of a strict attention to method in certain instances, and for those mistakes, which a dependance on the general accounts in the Minutes of the Associations may have occasioned. These inaccuracies, as far as they have been discovered, are corrected, at the close of the volume: and the author will esteem it a favour to be informed of any which remain unnoticed; that a second edition, should it ever be called for, may be less imperfect.

The materials for this volume having been drawn from the sources already mentioned, it was not necessary to crowd the page with references to authorities. The Minutes of the Annual Associations, the General Baptist Magazine and Repository, and a few Ordination services, which must have been incessantly quoted, are publications with which, it is presumed, the readers of this history are familiar.

Great difficulty was experienced in forming a plan which would exhibit, at once, a history of the Churches individually, and of the Connection as a body. The division of the

narrative into periods of fifteen years appeared the most eligible. But the Index is so constructed, that the entire history of any society may be easily traced, as well as a connected account of the public transactions of eminent ministers.

The author has too frequently found his duty painfully delicate. To record the failings of his associates and friends has cost him many a struggle. On these disagreeable occasions, he has laboured to preserve the fidelity of the narrative, and at the same time to do as little violence as possible to personal feeling. One great advantage of the work would have been entirely lost, had these unhappy circumstances been consigned to oblivion. It is hoped, that the perusal of the deplorable apostacy of some who made high professions, and the contentions and imperfections of other sincere but weak christians, together with the awful mischief which the cause of the blessed Redeemer has sustained by these means, will cause him that thinketh he standeth to take heed lest he fall: and excite every reader, but especially every minister, to be more earnest and constant in praying for grace to preserve him from giving any occasion to the enemies of the truth to blaspheme, and doubly vigilant in shunning every appearance of evil.

The work is now sent abroad with a cheerful hope, that it may, through the blessing of Him, in whose hands are the hearts of the children of men, give the religious world more just ideas of the design, doctrines and character of the New Connection of General Baptists than have hitherto been entertained, and thus procure for it, that esteem and countenance among other denominations, which it may appear to deserve; and that it may call the attention of those who compose that Connection to the true nature and principles of their union, and animate them to pursue, with greater zeal, affection and ability, its important objects. Should these hopes be realized, the labour of the writer and the support of his friends will be abundantly rewarded, in the support of his friends will be abundantly rewarded, in the increasing prosperity, respectability and purity of that cause, to which they, have, from principle, devote all their energies.

CONTRACTIONS IN THE REFERENCES, EXPLAINED.

A. A. B. The Minutes of Aylesbury Association. A. C. B. Amersham Church Book, Vol. I. 96. [These references are to the places in the following Work in which some account of these Manuscript will be found.] B. C. B. Berkhamstead Church Book. B. G. C. B. Bessell's Green Church Book. Bid. C. B. Biddenden Church Book, Vol. I. 283. B. MSS. Burgess' Manuscripts. C. C. B. Coningsby Church Book, Vol. I. 137. Ch. C. B. Chesham Church Book, Vol. I. 230. C. L. C. B. Church Lane Church Book. F. S. R. Fenstanton Records, Vol. I. 140-147. G. & C. Grantham's dispute with Connould, Vol. I. 308. J. T. MSS. Josiah Thompson's Manuscripts, Vol. II. 29. L. A. B. Lincolnshire Association Book, Vol. I. 318. N. C. A. B. New Connection Association Book. P. I. Private Information, collected from various sources, by friends on the spot. S.T.C.B. Shad Thames Church Book, Vol. I. 263. W.A.C.B. White's Alley Church Book. W.C.B. Warboys' Church Book, Vol. I. 104.

PART I.

THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BOOK I.

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO THE REFORMATION.

INTRODUCTION

A general baptist, who understands the true principles of his profession, does not esteem it necessary to trace his tenets through the several ages of the Church. He is persuaded, however early, and however generally, the contrary opinions may have prevailed, that those doctrines which distinguish him from other professors of christianity are expressly taught and enjoined in the grand commission which the adorable Head of the church gave to his Apostles, immediately before his taking his seat at the right hand of God.--"Go ye," said the ascending Saviour, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes, and is baptized, shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be condemned.

"Go ye forth, therefore, and proselyte all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." [Mark 16:15,16; Matt. 28:19] The New Testament, he is convinced, is full of evidence, that the Apostles and primitive Christians understood this divine Commission, and obeyed its sacred injunctions, in the same manner that he does. This has been proved at large by many of their writers: and it would evidently be improper for an historian to enter into the debate. But he may be permitted to state a few facts, which will prove, that, in all ages of the church, there have been Baptists, who have heartily joined with the first baptist, John, in pointing sinners to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

It is generally allowed by all, who have candidly examined the subject, that for the two first centuries after Christ, all who professed to be his followers were baptists, both as to the mode and subjects of that ordinance. They baptized none but such as made a credible profession of faith; and these they always immersed in water.--Towards the end of the second century, it became a question, whether infants ought to be baptized. The reason appears to have been that, about that time, they began to ascribe some mysterious efficacy to the ordinance; and to imagine that none who died unbaptized could be saved. This naturally engaged the humane parents and guardians to the eternal welfare of their children who died in infancy and led them to desire that they might be partakers of a rite so essential, and so powerful. By degrees the custom of baptizing infants was introduced; and, in the course of the third century, appears to have made some progress in the christian world. [Stennett's *Answer to Addington*, Second Part, Letter 16.] But, for many centuries after this, the mode of administering the ordinance remained unchanged. They baptized by immersion for ages. [Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*, Part. II. pages 290-

303.] During many succeeding centuries, the darkness of Popery grew gradually deeper and deeper, till it eclipsed almost totally, the light of the gospel; and involved the christian world in the darkness of error and superstition. Then the ordinances of the gospel were beclouded with false additions: and the simple institutions of the divine Legislator were lost in the time-serving accommodations and proud ceremonies of temporal policy. One part of the Lord's Supper was denied to the laity; and the other part exalted into an idol. Instead of the two simple and expressive institutions, appointed by Jesus Christ, seven sacraments, as they were called, were invented; loaded with childish ceremonies, and useless but imposing pageantry. During this long night, baptism was altered, both in design and administration, from what it appears in the New Testament. Instead of the striking act of plunging the person who professed to believe In Christ in water, and lifting him up again to express his death unto sin and life unto holiness--his belief in a dying and risen Saviour,--new-born infants became the unconscious subjects; and the mode was changed, at first to pouring water over the head and shoulders; and then gradually to sprinkling a few drops of water on the face. Various ceremonies and fooleries were invented. The whole transaction assumed an air of mystery and resembled some of the heathenish initiations more than a simple ordinances of christianity.

[In administering baptism according to the ritual of the Church of Rome, the Priest blew three puffs in the child's face, to expel the Devil--crossed various parts of its body, and the elements, fifteen times--exorcised the Devil three or four times--consecrated salt with many incantations, and put a little of it into the infant's mouth--changed his own dress--bedaubed the ears and nostrils of the child with his own spittle--pored water three times over its head--anointed its breast, head, and shoulders with holy oil--put a white cloth on its head, and a lighted taper into its hand, &c. &c. See the whole detail extracted from the Romish Ritual, in Grantham's *Hear the Church*, pp 24-27. The three pourings have degenerated into one sprinkling and some other circumstance of less importance may have been varied; but such was the practice, and such, in general, it continues: and, it is hoped, that this epitome of it will justify the expressions used in the text.]

It is however probable, that, during the darkness of popery there were always persons who professed many of the genuine doctrines of the gospel. Several historians have traced the baptism up to the apostolic time: and their adversaries allow, that some of the most ancient and most zealous opposers of the man of sin, have also asserted the doctrine of believers' baptism. We shall endeavour to take a hasty review of the principal of these worthies first in foreign countries, and then in our own, in the successive ages of the church.

CHAPTER. I.

TRACES OF BAPTISTS, IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES, PREVIOUS TO THE REFORMATION.

SECT. 1.--From Tertullian to the Conquest of Spain by the Moors: or, from A.D. 200 to A.D. 714.

TERTULLIAN, who flourished about A. D. 200, was the first who opposed infant baptism. The reason evidently is, that it then first began to be pleaded for, under the impression that those who died unbaptized must be eternally miserable. Not one instance of baptizing a single infant, nor one clear allusion to such a transaction can be traced previous to this writer. He assures us, that, in his time, the candidates for baptism made a profession of their faith twice; once in the church, before the congregation, and again when they came to the water. [Robinson's History of Baptism p. 58.] And he expresses the sense of the whole primitive church in this sentence, "We are made, but not born christians." When, therefore, some mistaken persons began to move for the baptizing of infants, Tertullian protested against it:--"Let children," said he, "come, when they grow up: let them come, when they learn, when they are instructed whither to come: let them become christians when they are able to know Christ." "Let them know how to ask for salvation; that you may appear to have given to him that asketh." [Wall's *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part I. pp.26, 27.]

Notwithstanding this rational opposition, the practice of infant baptism gained ground .At an African council, held by Cyrpian, in 257, it was recommended and was patronized about the same time by some leading men. It does not, however, appear that it made a rapid progress. Galetes, the dying son of the Emperor Valens is the first instance of infant baptism on record; and this happened, A. D. 370, above a century after the council of Carthage. "It was performed says Mr. Robinson, "by order of a monarch who swore he would not be contradicted. The age of the prince is uncertain: and the assigning his illness as the reason for his baptism, indicates clearly enough that infant baptism was not then generally practised." [Robinson's *Eccles. Researches*, p. 56.]

It is, indeed, evident that the practice of infant baptism was not then become general, or esteemed necessary for filling the highest offices of the Church. In the year 360, Basil thus addresses his hearers:--"Do you demur, and loiter, and put off? When you have been from a child catechized in the word, are you not yet acquainted with the truth?—Having been always learning it, are you not yet come to the knowledge of it?—A seeker all your life long?—a Considerer till you are old?—When will you be made a christian? When shall we see you become one of us?—Last year, you were for staying till this year: and now you have a mind to stay till next. Take heed that, by promising yourself a longer life, you do not quite miss of your hope. You do not know what change to-morrow may bring;" &c. [Robinson's *Hist. of Bap.* pp. 65-67.] Nothing can more explicitly establish the fact, that, in that age, instruction preceded baptism; that it was every one's voluntary act; and that even those who had been from children catechized in the word, were not

baptized till they arrived at years of maturity, and sought it for themselves. And all the instances on record of the administration of baptism, in this century, are in perfect consistency with the sentiments of this discourse. Gregory Nazianzen, the celebrated patriarch of Constantinople, was born A.D. 328. His father was, at his birth, not only a christian, but a minister; and, soon after, if not at the time, became bishop of Nazianzum. Yet this minister neither baptized his son Gregory, nor another son who was younger than Gregory, nor a daughter whose age is not precisely ascertained. They were all three baptized when grown to years of maturity, on a personal profession of faith: Gregory and his brother, when they were young men; and their sister, when she was a grandmother. [Wall's *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part II. pp. 52-62.] Constantine the great, Constantius his son; the emperors, Gratian, Valentinian II. and Theodosius I.; the bishops, Basil, Nectarius, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and several private christians, were all baptized at years of maturity, on a personal profession of faith. Augustine, the great champion of paedobaptism, though his mother, if not his father, was a christian at the time of his birth, was not baptized till the thirty-third year of his age. [Ibid. Part II. Chap. III. passim.] It is, indeed, acknowledged, that some learned defenders of infant baptism have made it probable, that the parents of some of these persons were not baptized christians at the time of the birth of these children: [Wall, ut supra.] but this is never assigned, by contemporary writers, as the reason of their baptism being deferred to years of discretion: and, respecting some of these instances, it is indisputable that their parents were, at their births, not only christians, but filled elevated stations in the church. The argument drawn from these that believers' baptism was the prevailing custom in that age, therefore stands unimpeached.

The first canon in favour of infant baptism, was promulged in the year 416, by the council of Mela in Numidia; which anathematized all its opposers. [Robinson's *Hist. of Bap.* p. 21.] This council was first held at Carthage and afterwards adjourned to Mela. Augustine exerted his utmost ability and influence to crush all whom he and his party chose to brand with the name of heretics. The Donatists were a very numerous, and, according to the testimony of their adversaries, a very respectable sect. In the beginning of the fifth century there were upwards of four hundred congregations in Africa, who were, at the instigation of Augustine and the Pope, delivered over to banishment and death. The magistrates hesitated; but the bishops were importunate, and the emperor their tool: so that persecution in all its horrors, depopulated these churches. [Mosheim *Eccles. Hist.* Vol. II. pp. 58-60.] There is good proof that many, if not all of these christians, were baptists. [For evidence of this fact, see Danvers' *Treatise of Baptism*, page 222, Second Edition, and Robinson's *History*, pp. 215 and 496. It would be tedious to transcribe the authorities produced by these writers; but we cannot omit here the testimony of Mr. Long Prebendary of St. Peter's, Exeter, as reported by Crosby, Vol. I. Pref. p. xlv.--"The Donatists did not only re-baptize the adults that came over to them; but refused to baptize children, contrary to the practice of the Church, as appears from several discourses of St. Austin."--*Hist Donatists*, p. 103.]

Pope Innocent I. confirmed the decrees of the council of Carthage. It is worthy of remark that the same pope, very consistently, confirmed the practice of infant communion, which had been introduced in the time of Cyprian and directed the Lord's supper to be given to

babes, as soon as they were baptized. [Wall, Part II. p. 357.] This pope persuaded the emperor to issue an edict, decreeing that the person rebaptized, as well as the administrator should be punished with death: and history records the names of some baptist ministers, who were executed, under the authority of this law, for presuming to baptize those who had been baptized in their infancy. [Danvers, 230, from Baronius.] The successes of the Goths and Vandals, for some time, put a stop to these bloody proceedings, as many of the conquerors governed with moderation; and granted liberty of conscience to all their subjects. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.*] During the sixth century there were many dissenters from the established church or, in the language of the times, many heretics, who opposed the catholics: and there is abundant evidence that many of these were baptists.

In the year 634, Justinian, the emperor, declared the pope head of all the churches. This was the prelude to the most intolerant persecution.--Where the power of the emperor was acknowledged, the iron hand of the pope was severely felt; but in those places which were subject to the enemies of Rome, a far greater degree of religious liberty was enjoyed. The baptists in Justinian's time are represented by two ancient historians, as "honest and godly christians; that from the example of Christ did reprove the evil custom of children's baptism, which, like an inundation, had then broken in." [Danvers, p. 230, from Rulicius.]

Adrian, bishop of Corinth, at the commencement of the seventh century, publicly opposed infant baptism, and would neither baptize infants himself, nor suffer them to be baptized by others. This roused the indignation of the pope Gregory, who instigated the prelates against him: and they persecuted him as a great transgressor and blasphemer. The Donatists under all their hardships, still flourished so much, that the same Gregory wrote to two African bishops to suppress them. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* p. 112.] Believers baptism was practised in Egypt, about A.D. 670; and in such esteem, that some in other countries imitated their example. [Kingsford's *Centenary Traces*, p. 131, from Vicecomes &c.]

SECT. 2. From the Conquest of Spain by the Moors to Peter de Bruys: or, from A.D. 714 to A.D. 1100.

The Moors conquered Spain A. D. 714. On this occasion many of the Spanish christians fled to the Pyrenean mountains, which separate their country from France, and either mixed with the old inhabitants, or settled near them.

Probably they formed little independent republics, under the protection of the Moors. In a short time, the mountains were overstocked with inhabitants and they spread themselves into the adjacent vallies, on the Spanish territories. Continuing still to increase near the middle of this century, many thousands of these people, with their wives, children, and servants, emigrated over the Pyrenees, and settled in the French provinces at the northern foot of the mountains. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 242, 280, &c.] They remained, almost unmolested, for nearly five hundred years; and, during the grossest darkness of popery, preserved much of the primitive doctrines, practices, and spirit of christianity. They were

the ancestors of those pious sufferers, who were so dreadfully persecuted, under the names of Waldenses, Albigenses, &c. There is strong evidence that many of these ancient Waldenses were baptists; as we shall find their followers were, when they became the objects of persecution. Besides those fugitives, numbers, who in the language of the catholics were denominated heretics continued in Spain: and enjoyed, under the government of the Mahometans, greater religious liberty than they had done under the catholics. They were distinguished by various names; but they all agreed in one article.-- They rebaptized all such as joined their communities; and they baptized none without a personal profession of faith. They called themselves christians: and asserted that a New Testament church consisted only of virtuous persons, born of water and the Spirit. [Ibid. 246.]

Indeed, so far was the practice of infant baptism from being universally approved, that council of Laodicea held about this time, decreed that, those that will come to baptism ought first to be instructed in the faith, and to make a confession thereof." [*Cent. Traces*, 144.] A doctrine that appears to have been countenanced by several eminent men, of this century, however they were led by custom to adopt a contrary practice. The council Paris, A.D. 829, has this remarkable canon: "In the beginning of the holy church of God, no one was admitted to baptism, unless he had before been instructed in the holy sacrament of faith and baptism: which is proved by the words of Paul, Rom. 6: 3,4." [Booth's *Paedob. Exam.* II. 83.]

From the reign of Constantine, when the first established national church had been founded, there were always numbers of dissenters in the eastern empire; who were persecuted, favoured, neglected, or caressed, according to the circumstances of the times. About the year 970, the patriarch of Antioch complained to John Zimisces, the emperor, that his patriarchate was full of heretics; and begged to be freed from them. The emperor complied with his request; but, instead of extirpating these heretics, he removed them to Philippolis; and gave them liberty of conscience. The whole adjacent country was soon filled with inhabitants free and happy; [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 73-75.] and from hence they spread themselves, all over Europe, under the denomination of Philippopolitans, which was corrupted, in different countries, into Popolicans, Publicani, or Publicans. Ecclesiastical historians assure us, that they asserted that infants ought not to be baptized till they arrived at years of understanding. This was naturally to be expected, as they were the descendants of the Greek nonconformists; most of whom practised believers' baptism. [Booth's *Paed. Bap.* ii. 125.]

In the eleventh century, the advocates of believers' baptism became more conspicuous. The Waldenses, in the south of France, were numerous and respectable. They had many powerful protectors amongst the nobility: and their tenets attracted considerable attention. Their opposition to infant baptism was one of the most striking of their peculiar tenets, and drew upon them great persecution. Many of them were condemned and executed at Thoulouse and in Aquitain, in 1017; and, in 1022, fourteen were burnt alive at Orleans. One of the crimes for which they suffered, was, the denial of baptism; which, in the lips of a catholic, meant refusing it to infants: or, as stated by others, denying that it confers

grace, or is necessary to salvation. The chief plea on which infant baptism was first introduced. [Usher, on the Succession in Ann.]

A numerous sect had arisen in Italy, under the very eye of the pope. Their chief residence was at Milan; and in that neighbourhood they flourished for two centuries. At one time, they had upwards of fifteen hundred members; and their churches appear to have been organized in distinct associations. [Robinsons *Eccl. Res.* p. 409.] The catholics distinguished them by the name of Paterines. The whole system of catholic discipline was resolutely opposed by them, and infant baptism in particular. In the year 1025, some of them were examined by a catholic bishop; when they pleaded, in this rational manner, against ministering the ordinance to children. "Because," said they, "to an infant, that neither wills nor runs, that knows nothing of faith, is ignorant of its own salvation and welfare, in whom there can be no desire of regeneration, or confession of faith, the will, faith, and confession of another seem not, in the least, to appertain." [Stennett against Russen, p. 84.]

About the year 1,035, Bruno, the bishop of Angers in France, and Berengarius, archdeacon of the same church, opposed the errors of Rome. They are charged, by one of their contemporaries, with overthrowing, in far as in them lay, the baptism of infants. [Wall, Part II. p. 159.] Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1021, wrote against these reformers and asserts that by denying infant baptism they opposed the general doctrine and universal consent of the church." [Danvers, p. 243, from Matt. Paris, Anno 1087.] The followers of these men were numerous and spread into divers countries to such a degree that an ancient historian says, Berengarius drew all France, Italy and England to his opinions. [Baronius's *Annals*, A.D. 1095.]

The baptists appear about this time to have spread in various countries. Besides those already mentioned who suffered in France, many were put to death at Parenza in Italy. [As Anselm, Buchardus Normantis, Ado. Treverensis, Bonizo bishop of Placentis, &c.-- See Cen. Tr. pp. 176-179.]

Peter Abalardus, a learned man, and a great opposer of infant baptism, was imprisoned and martyred at Rome: and at Goslar in Germany, several were executed for the same crime. Yet in this century there were many eminent writers who taught that faith ought to precede baptism.

SECT. 3. From Peter de Bruys to the persecution of the Albigenses: or, from A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1200.

In the commencement of the twelfth century Peter de Bruys made the most laudable attempt to reform the abuses, and to remove the superstitions which had disfigured the beautiful simplicity of the gospel. After having engaged in his cause a great number of followers, during a laborious ministry of twenty years, he was burnt to death, at St. Giles near Thoulouse, A.D. 1130, by an enraged populace, set on by the clergy. His disciple, Henry, succeeded to his labour, and sufferings. He had been a monk, and an hermit but being convinced of the errors of popery, he left Lausanne, a city in Switzerland, and

travelled to Mons. Being banished from Mons, he removed successively to Poitiers, Bourdeaux, and the countries adjacent. At length in 1147, he arrived at Thoulouse. In all these places he exercised his ministerial functions with the utmost applause; and declaimed, with the greatest vehemence, against the vices of the clergy, and the superstitions, which they had introduced into the christian church. He was warmly opposed, at Thoulouse, by St. Bernard: and, notwithstanding his popularity, was obliged to save himself by flight. A bishop seized him, in his retreat, and carried him before pope Eugenius III. who presided in person, at a council then assembled at Rheims. By him he was committed, in 1148 to a close prison, where in a little time, he ended his days. [Mosheim's *Eccl. History*, Vol. III. pp. 116, 117.]

Though we have no accurate account of the doctrines taught by these reformers, yet all paedo-baptists allow that they rejected the baptism of infants Their followers increased much; and were long known by the appellations of Petrobrussians and Henricians. [Wall, Part II. pp. 172-188.] Dr. Wall calls these two reformers the first anti-paedobaptist preachers that ever set up a church that rebaptized those who had been baptized in their infancy. ib. p. 184.]

The emperor Alexias took great pains to reunite, to the catholic church, those independent sectaries, whom his predecessor, Zimisces, had settled at Philippolis; and burnt Basil, the physician, one of their principal men. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res*, pp. 79-84.] This caused several of the Greeks to leave those parts, and remove into Italy; where, during the twelfth, century they gained many followers and spread their tenets. They were frequently called cathari or puritans; and denied baptism to children, because they want understanding. Arnold, of Brescia, was a man of note among these Italian dissenters. He was condemned at Rome by the Pope, in 1155: and was first hanged, then his body burnt, and his ashes were thrown into the Tiber. [Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.* Vol, III. p. 119.]

In this century the Waldenses continued to increase. The labours of Peter Waldo appear to have contributed much to their success. This pious man was, originally, a merchant at Lyons; having been induced, by the sudden death of a friend, in 1160, to study the scriptures, became acquainted with the way of salvation, and was convinced of the corruptions and errors of the church of Rome. He therefore relinquished commerce, distributed his goods amongst the poor, and devoted himself to the work of the ministry. He procured a translation of several parts of the Old Testament into the French language; and was indefatigable in publishing the sacred contents of the oracles of truth. His success was great. Numerous disciples flocked round him and congregations were formed. The archbishop of Lyons forbade him to preach; but Waldo, for some time, disregarded his prohibition. He formed many distinct societies, and was instrumental in raising up many faithful ministers. At length, he found it necessary to remove into Dauphiny, accompanied by many of his followers. After spreading the gospel in this province they went into Picardy; and there appears to have laboured with peculiar success. So numerous were his disciples in Picardy, that they attracted the notice of government. Troops were sent against them, and they were treated like public enemies. Their houses were overthrown, their villages consumed, and towns destroyed Six

hundred of these innocent people were burnt in one day, by order of Philip Augustin, who began his reign, in 1180. [Martin's *Memoirs of French Protestants*, p. 15.] Many, to avoid these cruelties, retired into Flanders.--Thither fire and sword followed them: and many suffered death there, in 1182, for opposing infant baptism. Waldo fled into Germany; and at last settled in Bohemia, where he died in peace, A.D. 1179. [Fox's *Acts and Monuments* Vol. 1. p. 260. It is not intended to assert that Waldo was the founder of this-sect.--Dissenters from the catholics had existed as, we have seen, in every age; but this zealous minister appears to have been an instrument of reviving their cause and increasing their numbers.]

In Germany, this sect was dreadfully persecuted. Eighty were burnt at Strasburgh: and, at Cologn, Arnold, an eminent Waldensian, and ten of his associates, who opposed the commission of Christ against infant baptism, suffered the same punishment, Aug. 2, 1163: besides numbers in other parts. [Abp. Usher, *Suc.* p. 292.]

In the middle of this century, a very numerous and powerful branch of Waldenses attracted public attention. They were called Albigenses, from the town of Alby, in the province of Languedoc, where they first appeared. Peter Auterius, an eminent minister among them, was condemned, by the inquisition, for saying, among other things, that "water baptism, performed by the church, is of no use to children; because they do not consent: nay, they weep." [Limborch's *History of the Inquisition*, Book O. Ch. VIII.]

SECT. 4.—The sufferings of the Albigenses, &c. from A.D. 1200 to A.D. 1400.

In the thirteenth century, the Waldenses and Albigenses had vastly increased in numbers; and spread their doctrines through the southern part of Europe. In 1260, the Waldenses alone were computed at eight hundred thousand. [Perrin's *Hist. of Old Waldenses*, Book II. Chap. II.] Their principal residence continued to be at the foot of the Pyrenees, in the provinces of Languedoc, Dauphiny, Bearn, &c. Their numbers and prosperity alarmed the pope: and he determined to take the most effectual methods to put a stop to their progress. He wrote epistles to them, exhorting them to return to the [Roman] church, and lay aside their errors. To these succeeded numbers of friars and monks, whom he sent to preach in the country, and to dispute with the people.—The preachers were reinforced by legates, who had special commissions to compel them to reform. The legates called to their aid inquisitors, who then first began to exercise more than savage cruelties, in the name of the merciful Jesus. All these efforts, however, proved ineffectual. The heretics met tortures and deaths, in the most frightful forms, with a constancy that did honor to their cause; and, not unfrequently, gained them proselytes from among their persecutors. Every harsh and unchristian method, used to induce them to conform, furnished them with an additional reason for persisting in their nonconformity. The pope, thus baffled, resolved to pursue more decisive measures. He declared these heretics not worthy of a place in society, and inculcated on all good catholics the duty and merit of exterminating such insolent enemies of God and the church. To animate them to engage in this pious work, agents were sent to all parts of Europe, with authority from the pope, to promise a pardon of all sins, and the certain possession of paradise, to all who would undertake a pilgrimage of forty days, to fight against the heretics.

Impious and ridiculous as these proposals appear to us, in the darkness in which the world was, at that time, involved, they had the desired effect. Multitudes flocked to the standard of the pope, and proceeded, under the banner of the cross, to merit heaven by exterminating their fellow-men, their fellow-subjects, and, in many instances, their near relatives. It is computed that at the command of the pope, there marched against the peaceable Waldenses more than five hundred thousand fanatics: of whom more than three hundred thousand lost their lives in the conflict. The results were dreadful beyond description. Murder, devastation, and cruelty, for more than two centuries, disfigured the fairest parts of Europe. The numbers that perished by famine, tortures, and ill usage, were immense. In France alone, above five hundred thousand are supposed to have been slain; and the victims of papal cruelty and policy, in other places, are thought to have at least doubled the bloody amount. This is a moderate computation. Some writers make the number destroyed in France to exceed one million. Their sufferings were great. They were attacked, in their peaceful villages, and driven, in the most inclement weather, to the inhospitable mountains. The inhabitants of the valley of Pragela were thus assaulted, on a Christmas-day, when the ground was covered with snow; and were driven, at the point of the sword, from their habitations, which were instantly set on fire by their pursuers. They took their infants in their cradles, and the fathers carried such as could not walk. Many were killed before they reached the mountains over which they must pass to reach an asylum. The night overtook them: and they were obliged to spend it without shelter. In the morning eighty young infants were found frozen to death in their cradles: and the greatest part of their mothers expiring at their sides. On another occasion, being pursued by the king's lieutenant in Picardy, they took shelter in the rocks and caverns. The rocks and caverns were scoured by the troops; and all they could seize were put to the sword. Heaps of wood were piled in the entrances of such caverns as were impenetrable to their pursuers, and set on fire. Many of the Waldenses, driven to desperation, rushed out;--threw themselves headlong down the rocks, and were dashed to pieces. When the caverns were examined, more than four hundred infants were found smothered to death in their cradles, or clasped in the arms of their dead mothers. [Perrin's *Hist. of the Waldenses*, Book II. Chap. 3.]

While these public measures were pursuing to ruin these innocent people, the bishops and inquisition omitted no opportunity to harass them privately. They were excommunicated and anathematized; their goods were confiscated; their bodies were imprisoned, tortured, insulted and spit upon; their ears cut off; their flesh plucked off with pincers, they were torn asunder by horses; dragged up and down; broiled, roasted, burnt, drowned, and beheaded. But it would be too affecting to enter into the horrid detail of the various secret and overt acts of cruelty and oppression, exercised against these devoted people. The result was, to adopt the words of Thuanus, "They were slain, put to flight, spoiled every where of their goods and dignities, and dispersed here and there, rather, than that convinced of their error they repented.--They fled into Provence and the neighbouring Alps, and found a shelter for their lives and doctrine in those places. Part withdrew into Calabria and continued there a long time, even to the middle of the sixteenth century: part passed into Germany, and fixed their abode among the Bohemians, and in Poland and Lithuania; and others obtained a refuge in Britain." It is very probable that thousands of

their descendants retained their principles till the reformation; when, by degrees, they mixed with the protestants and were no longer known as a distinct people.

The Waldenses and Albigenses were very numerous and scattered in distant countries. They appear to have existed, under a great variety of names throughout the dark ages: though they became more conspicuous in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It cannot be supposed, that, among so numerous a succession of men, who claimed the right of private judgment and laid down their lives in defence of their claims, there was an uniformity of sentiment and practice. In different ages and countries, and frequently at the same time and place, there existed a diversity of opinions, which did not interrupt their harmony. They placed religion in piety and virtue: and left speculation unconfined and free. That many of them rejected infant baptism has been abundantly proved, by several baptist writers: we can only glance at the principle evidence.

Many eminent men among them were baptists. Bruno and Berengarius, Peter de Bruys, and his colleague Henry, Arnold, and several others, have been mentioned, in the course of this sketch: and respecting most of them, sufficient evidence produced, that they opposed infant baptism, or defended believers' baptism in such a manner as to overthrow the contrary practice. If then the leading men were baptists it is very natural to conclude that their followers held the same sentiments.

From several ancient confessions of their faith it appears that they admitted only two sacraments: and in one, of a very ancient date, they say, "By baptism we are received into the holy congregation of the people of God; there protesting and declaring openly our faith and amendment of life." [Perrins *Hist Wald.* Book I. Chap. XIII.] This certainly is inconsistent with infant baptism; but applies exactly to the baptism of believers, on a profession of faith and obedience. In an ancient treatise, written about 1120 perhaps by Peter de Bruys, they say that "Antichrist attributes the regeneration of the Holy Spirit unto the dead outward work; baptizing children into that faith and teaching that thereby baptism and regeneration must be had: grounding therein all his christianity which is against the Holy Spirit. And, in all their confessions, they totally disallow all, human inventions or traditions: and appeal to the scriptures as the only standards of faith and doctrine. [Ibid. Books I. and V.]

The popes and councils, who issued out their decrees, &c. against the different sects of the Waldenses, enforced the baptism of infants;--a strong proof that it was opposed by those sectaries. Thus, pope Leo IX, in his decretal epistle, in 1050, addressed to the bishop of Aquitain, a province in which the Waldenses abounded, commands that "young children should be baptized, on account of original sin." [Danvers, 248, from Usher.] Pope Innocent III. in 1025, decrees, "That baptism is profitable to adult persons, and also to infants:" and the same pope, in his decretals, in answer to a letter from the bishop of Arles, in Provence, a country noted as the nursery of these sects, A.D. 1199, says that "It had been represented to him that some heretics, in those parts had taught, that it was to no purpose to baptize children since they could have no forgiveness of sins thereby; as having no faith, charity, &c." [Wall, Part. II. p. 178.] He therefore concluded that, "Since baptism is come in the form of circumcision, therefore, not alone the elder, but also the

younger children, which of themselves neither believe nor understand, shall be baptized; and in their baptism original sin shall be forgiven them." In the year 1176, pope Alexander III sent a cardinal and three bishops to extirpate the Albigenses. In order to discover them, they drew up a number of articles to which they required the suspected to swear. Some of these were, "We believe that none are saved except they are baptised: and that children are saved by baptism." In the same year, the Gallican council, speaking of these heretics, as they called them, in their third canon, say,--"They convince and judge them of heresy, for denying baptism to children; or that they are to be saved thereby." [Danvers, 254, from Usher.]

Their adversaries charge them with this error.--Bernard, who had many disputes with them, says, "The Cathari, a sect of the Waldenses, laughed at the catholics, for baptizing of infants." [Wall, Part. II. p. 176.] Eckbertus, a famous doctor, who wrote about 1160, accuses them of saying baptism ought to be deferred till they come to years of discretion: and that then only, when they can, with their own mouths make a profession of faith, and desire it." [Ibid. 168.] A dominican persecutor of these heretics complained, that, "although the prayers of the priest and the sign of the cross absolved the child, when it came out of the water, from every sin; yet these heretics admitted another baptism." [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* p. 463.] The same accusation is made by Estrardus, Ermengendus, Peter of Clugny, and many other contemporaries. [Danvers, ut supra.]

These reasons have induced many learned paedobaptists, both papists and protestants, to admit that there were some of the Waldenses opposed infant baptism, on the same principles as the modern baptists do. We mention a few. Chassanion, a French writer of the History of the Albigenses, who collected his material from original records, acknowledges, "I cannot deny, that the Albigenses, for the most part, opposed infant baptism." [Stenntt against Addington, Second Part, p. 155.] Mt. Wall, after an elaborate examination, concludes, though with evident reluctance, "These proofs do, I think, evince that there were some, about this time, that denied infant baptism, among those parties of men that have been lately called Waldenses." [*Hist. of Infant Baptism*, Part. II. page 179.] The cardinals, Baronius and Hosius, and those respectable writers, Limborch [*Hist. Inquisit.* Book II. Chap. VIII], Venema [*Hist. Eccl.* Book VII. p. 443], and Mosheim [*Eccles. Hist.* Vol. IV. p. 443], who had paid peculiar attention to this subject, all agree in the same opinion.

SECT. 5.--From the destruction of the Albigenses to Jerome of Prague: or, from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1600.

Wihelmina, a zealous Bohemian lady, who settled at Milan, taught and baptized in that city with great success. She died, in peace, in 1281 and the ignorant Catholics, having known the holiness of her life, said their prayers at her grave.--Nineteen years afterwards, her bones were dug up and burnt and her followers proceeded against as heretics. [Robinson *Eccles. Researches*, p. 413.]

The Lollards or Wickliffites, in the thirteenth century, had many baptists among them, and were greatly persecuted Many were burnt at Crema in Austria, in for opposing infant

baptism; and, in 1373, a pious woman, named Peronne, underwent a similar punishment for a similar crime, at Aubiton, in Flanders. [Danvers, p 234.] In 1808, Dulcinus, and Margaretha, his wife, were burnt at Novaria in Italy, for attachment to believers baptism: and, in 1417, Catherine Suabe died at Montpellier, in the same manner, in defence of the same cause. [Dr. Stennett against Addington, Part II. p. 255.]

In the ear 1411, a class of religious persons arose in Bohemia, known by the denomination of Pygherds, Picards, or Beghards; and not unfrequently referred to under the general term Waldenses. They were, for some time, favoured by the archbishop of Prague: but after they had renounced infant baptism, and begun to baptize their converts before they admitted them into church fellowship, he found it prudent, at first to keep them at a distance; and afterwards, being urged on by the pope's threatenings, to persecute them. These professors appear to have been of very different sentiments; but they agreed in baptizing all that joined them. When they were persecuted in Prague, they retired into Moravia, and made that country their chief settlement; though many went into other countries. The only attempt to disturb them, made during the reign of Maximilian, was providentially defeated. That emperor, though a friend to the liberty of conscience, was induced, by the efforts of the catholics of Prague, to grant an edict against them. The chancellor of Bohemia who had been at court to prosecute the measure, set out for Prague with the edict; but, in passing the Danube, the bridge gave way, and he and his companions were drowned. His corpse was taken up by a fisherman; but the edict was never recovered. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 499-521.]

In the year 1415, John Huss was burnt at the council of Constance; and, the year following, Jerome of Prague shared the same fate. These zealous Bohemian ministers had preached the gospel with great success, and very plainly exposed the wickedness of popery. Amongst other important principles, they insisted, in their public labours, on the following.--"The law of Jesus Christ is sufficient, of itself, for the government of the church."--"All human traditions savour of folly."--"No other law besides the rule of the scriptures ought to be prescribed."--"The devil is the author of multiplying traditions in the church," &c. Now, though we do not assert that these two martyrs were baptists, yet these principles, if followed to their legitimate consequences, would certainly have led them to renounce infant baptism. There is some reason no believe that Jerome pursued them go far: and there is abundant proof, that multitudes of their followers practised believers baptism. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 481-514.]

A number of the descendants of the ancient Waldenses had, for centuries, inhabited the woods and forests, situated in Bohemia and Hungary, in the marquisate of Moravia. These inoffensive people baptized their converts by immersion on a confession-of faith: which ordinance they considered as a public profession of Christianity. They lived in forty- five divisions, called colleges or fraternities; and each of these communities consisted of many families who had all things in common. Some of these houses carried on manufactories; others were factors or merchants; and others, employed in agriculture and the wine trade. All were busy, peaceable, and happy under regulations of their own making, Their numbers cannot be easily determined; but the lowest computation makes it amount to upwards of twenty thousand. The patronage of' the secular princes, and of the

proprietors of the lands on which they had settled, who found their own interest in protecting such industrious tenants, for a long time, defended them against the rage of the ecclesiastics and the thunder of the popes, which had, on several occasions, been levelled against them, At length, Ferdinand II. having conquered Bohemia, determined to extirpate heresy out of his dominions; and as the principles of the Moravian baptists would not allow them to make any resistance, he thought it most prudent to begin with them. He, accordingly, at the commencement of- the sixteenth century, wrote to the general of the army in Moravia, and to the governor of the province, to inform them of his design, and require their concurrence, on pain of his displeasure. He then published an edict against the baptists, banishing them all, both natives and foreigners, from his hereditary and imperial dominions. Three weeks and three days only were allowed for their departure; and it was death to be found even on the borders of the country, one hour after the expiration of the time. It was autumn; their fields were white for the harvest; and their vines weighed down with the ripening clusters. But in silent submission to that Power who governs the universe, they packed up their effects, and departed. They conveyed their sick, their innocent infants sucking at the breasts of their mothers, and their decrepit parents, in several hundred carriages. At the borders they separated: some going to Transylvania; some, to Wallachia, and others to Poland. But though this decree scattered these people, it did not destroy them: baptists of this class continue to the present day; and maintain, in a good degree, the same christian simplicity. [Robinson's Eccl. Res. pp. 522-527.]

SECT. 6.--The Munster Anabaptists: from A. D. 1524 to A. D. 1535.

Having thus brought our account of these foreign baptists to the Reformation, when all parties acknowledge that they were numerous, we might here close this chapter. But it would, perhaps, be thought partial to omit, even in this hasty sketch, those baptists who have, for nearly three centuries, been the darling theme of many paedobaptists and whose excesses have furnished such favourite arguments against believers' baptism. The Munster anabaptists, as they are termed, will not be suffered to fall into oblivion and therefore it may be necessary for us to notice them.

Prior to the Reformation, the inferior orders of the people in Germany had long been in the most abject state of degradation. They were divided into three classes: the slaves, the villains, and the freemen. The slaves, with their wives and children and the produce of their industry, were the absolute property of their owner. He treated them with the greatest rigour; compelled them to labour to the utmost of their strength; inflicted corporeal punishment on them, at his pleasure and, if he killed them, was liable only to a small fine.--The villains paid a fixed rent for their farms; but were confined to the soil, and transferred with the estate.--The freemen were, indeed, permitted to hold a little property; but their condition was rendered so, wretched, by the oppression of their superiors, that they frequently renounced their privileges and went, by choice, into the class of slaves. The whole nation, both clergy and laity, had sunk into the grossest ignorance; and tyranny, the most intolerable and provoking, had been exercised, under the mask of religion. Luther had recently broken the charm and taught men to think for themselves. He had successfully set ecclesiastical usurpation at defiance. All Europe

observed the interesting event; and all were agitated. Men of the lowest rank began to feel their own importance, and to aspire after that liberty, which he had taught them, that they, in common their fellow-men, were entitled. Encouraged by the success of Luther's bold measures, the oppressed people of Germany were induced to make a struggle for the recovery of some of their civil rights. They rose on their tyrants, expelled the monks and magistrates out of several cities, and formed a new police. The insurrection had spread over several provinces, forty-thousand men were in arms, and most of the nobility had fled, before Thomas Muncer, a baptist minister, espoused their cause.

Thomas Muncer had been a priest before he became a disciple of Luther. He was, for some time, highly esteemed by the leaders of the Reformation; but, when he adopted the practice of believers baptism, he lost much of his credit among them. He laboured assiduously as an itinerant preacher, through the greatest part of Saxony. His deportment was grave and humble and his discourses plain and easy. After having been driven from several places by persecution, he settled at Mulhausen in Upper Saxony. Here he had preached for some time with great success before the peasants took up arms; when, being convinced of the justice of their cause, he joined them, in the year 1514; and was esteemed their leader. He drew up for them a Memorial, which was presented to their lords, and dispersed throughout Germany. In this their grievances and demands are distinctly stated. It consisted of twelve articles, of which only the two first could be supposed to have any connection with religion. In the first they pray that they be permitted to choose their own ministers; and on proper occasions to dismiss them. The second requires that they might be eased of all tythes except that on corn; which, they request, may be applied in equal portions to the support of teachers the relief of the poor, and the payment of those civil taxes which were levied on the poor. The other ten articles stipulate for personal freedom the right of fishing, hunting, &c.--the privilege of cutting wood in the forests--an amelioration of the services of villainage--a restitution of the tenures of farms to their original grants--a reduction of the annual rents--a reformation of the mode of administering justice --a restoration of the commons to the peasantry--and the abolition of the claiming of heriots. The concluding article states, that this memorial contains their present grievances; but that they are willing to make any alterations to truth and scripture, and tending to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind.

It is evident, that these claims had no connection with the belief or practice of believers baptism: nor, indeed, with the distinguishing principles of any sect. They were the demands of men, as members of civil society; and some of the best of statesmen have admitted both the moderation and justice of these claims. Persons of every denomination of christians might, and actually did, join in supporting them; and the paedobaptists appear to have been as hearty in the cause as the baptists. Nor need any party be ashamed to acknowledge these patriots as brethren. Had it pleased the Governor of the universe to have crowned their efforts with success, Muncer and his associates would have been ranked with the assertors of the rights of man and immortalized as the saviours of their country.--But they were unsuccessful. The Landgrave of Hesse marched against them; with a numerous army.--Seven thousand of them fell in the conflicts: and Muncer, being taken some time afterwards, was beheaded, at Mulhausen, in 1525. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 535-554.]

This defeat did not terminate the struggle. It continued for many years; and in various parts of Germany, it was attended with circumstances much more criminal. The people, exasperated by their sufferings, appear to have been made the tools of enthusiastic and ill-designing men; who, taking advantage of the ferment of the public mind, joined the peasants, and led them into almost every kind of excess. In the spring of the year 1534, the populace, in the city of Munster, drove the citizens and clergy out of the town, and made themselves masters of it. The first mover of this tumult was one Bernard Rotman, at that time a Lutheran minister, though he afterwards opposed infant baptism. This man having in his sermons inveighed loudly against the errors of the church of Rome, the papists bought him off with a sum of money and prevailed on him to leave the city. After months, he returned, and threatened the principal inhabitants, that, if they would not open the churches to him, he would procure it to be done by force. The mob rose in his favor and he executed his threat. He was soon after joined by several turbulent enthusiasts from the neighbouring cities, some of whom professed believer's baptism. If we credit the reports of their enemies they advanced many extravagant and impious opinions and committed numerous acts of excess, cruelty, and violence. John Bockhold, known by the appellation of John of Leydon, set himself up for ruler; and assumed the title of King of Sion. He appointed twelve judges to govern the new republic of Israel; and sent twenty apostles into the neighbouring countries, to preach his doctrines. They proceeded, in this manner, and bade defiance to all the forces that could be brought against them for more than a year. The bishop of Munster, at length, by the assistance of an anabaptist that joined his army, took the town, May 28th 1535: and the pretended king of Sion, being apprehended, was first dreadfully tortured and then pierced through the heart with a dagger, in the beginning of the following year. [Brandt's *History of Reformation*. Vol. I. Book II.]

SECT. 7.--Remarks on these Insurrections, and their effects.

There is reason to believe that, extravagant and wicked as these madmen certainly were, yet they have been painted in too horrid colours. All the accounts of their opinions and practices which have reached us, have been preserved in the writings of their enemies; who, probably found it necessary to render the characters of the anabaptists as odious as possible, that they might justify the horrid persecutions to which they were afterwards exposed. The insurgents, at Munster, have generally been identified with the adherents of Muncer; but the doctrines attributed to the former are directly opposed to the memorial published by the latter. One instance will sufficiently shew this. The insurgents, at Munster, are charged with holding, that dominion is founded in grace, that the saints have a right to overturn governments, depose magistrates, and rule all things themselves. Nothing, certainly, can be more destructive of the peace and even existence of society, than these principles: yet they are frequently ascribed, with great confidence, to the anabaptists in general almost all the writers of those ages. But, in the third article of their memorial, Muncer and his followers declare, that they wished not to be free from the controul of magistrates, "whose office they honoured, as being of divine appointment, and whose just laws they would obey." It is plain, therefore, either that these men have been slandered; or that, some of the zealots at Munster advanced opinions which the sober part even of the insurgents themselves abhorred. This is the more probable, as

many, who were afterwards executed, as parties in these tumults, constantly persisted, under the most exquisite tortures, in denying even with their latest breath, the extravagancies imputed to them.

Again, this insurrection at Munster was by no means the only instance, in those unsettled times, of popular tumults, under the pretence of religion. Almost every principal town in Germany and the Netherlands witnessed similar scenes. Nor were they confined, to any party. Catholics rose against protestants and protestants against catholics; the reformed, as they called themselves, against the Lutherans, and the Lutherans against the reformed. [Brandt, ut supra.] The anabaptists, indeed, appears in this confusion, to have been the common object of persecution with every party. Every mans hand was against them and it is no wonder hand was against every man Oppression maketh even wise men mad.

But, allowing that every thing reported of these men is true, what have the modern baptists to do with them? Were their vices and excesses the necessary effects of their opinions respecting the subject or mode of baptism?--If not, is it not equally ungenerous and irrational to introduce them into the controversy?--Besides, it is very impolitic in the paedobaptists to adopt this mode of argument; for if it be allowed to them, it must be to their, opponents. And if the excesses and cruelties committed by the various classes of paedobaptists, protestant and papist, not only in these times of confusion, but in every age of the church, should be urged as evidence against infant baptism, the baptists would easily make a dreadful reply to any argument drawn from the transactions at Munster!* -- But they disdain such ungenerous and foreign topics: their cause needs such support.

[* When we said, in the beginning of the last section, that the Munster anabaptists would not be suffered to fall into oblivion; we did not expect soon to see them made the subject of a separate publication. But, it seems, we had formed too favorable an estimate of the disposition and understandings of some of our contemporaries.--An account of the tumults at Munster, extracted from Dr. Robertson's History of Charles V. has since been published in a two-penny tract, under the deceptive title of "The History of the Baptists," by W. Robertson, D.D. &c. &c. This piece, which is adapted, and doubtless meant, to circulate widely among the uninformed and credulous, is obviously designed to lead them to conclude that the tenets and practices that distinguish the baptists first originated in those times of confusion, and were till then unknown; and to induce them to identify the present adherents to those doctrines with the German insurgents. Such an insidious attempt to mislead the ignorant and traduce the innocent, certainly reflects a lustre on the boasted candour and liberality of this enlightened age; and will be duly appreciated by every intelligent observer.]

Lastly--It is very certain that though some enthusiasts who denied infant baptism disgraced themselves and their profession by their extravagant opinions and practices, yet there were thousands of baptists at that time, and in those countries, who deserved and obtained a very different character. Not to mention the many instances of rational piety and holy conduct in individuals of that persuasion who were persecuted to death itself, which extorted the admiration even of their enemies, we shall transcribe the testimonies of several impartial and competent witnesses to their general character who exerted his

whole force in opposing observes, that they owed their great success to three things; the first was "that their teachers deafened their hearers with numberless passages of scripture: the second, that they affected a great appearance of sanctity: the third, that their followers discovered great constancy in their sufferings and deaths." Beza, who will not be suspected of favouring them, and who had good opportunities of knowing them, says-- "Many of the anabaptists are good men, servants of G0d, and our dear brethren." Cassander, who, as well as Beza, lived in those times and had many disputes with the anabaptists, declares, "They discovered an honest and pious mind; and erred from the faith through a mistaken zeal; rather than an evil disposition:--they condemned the outrageous conduct of their brethren at Munster, and taught that the kingdom of Christ was to be established only by the cross." [Crosby, Vol. I. Pref. p. xxviii. &c.]

The paedobaptists, however, contrived to throw whole odium of this disgraceful business on baptists, and a most violent persecution followed. Papists and protestants united in hunting down this slandered people and put to death many who had used all their influence to prevent the enormities that had been committed. In March, 1549, five men and three women were burnt at Amsterdam, because they offered themselves to be re-baptized. About the same time, two men and one woman were executed for the same crime at Leuwarden. In 1558, above forty baptists fell, by the hand of the executioner; and an equal number in the following year. [Brandt's Hist. Ref. under the respective years.] But to enumerate particulars would far exceed the limits of this sketch. We therefore sum up the whole in the words of an intelligent writer, who appears to have well examined the subject.--"I have," says he, "carefully told over five hundred and seventy odd persons, all anabaptists, who were put to death, merely on account of religion, exclusive of, and in contradiction to, any who suffered as charged with treason, rebellion, sedition, &c. Nor have I reckoned into the number a whole assembly of those people who were betrayed at Rotterdam, in 1554, for I cold not make an estimate of their number; but all that were caught of these were executed. Upon a fair computation, then, this scantling of anabaptists, who suffered in and about the Low Countries, for their religious principles, amounts considerably to above the highest number of those, of whatsoever denomination, who were put to death in England on account of the Reformation. What I further observe, is, that in the judgment of charity there appeared in these, not only equal firmness of mind, and the traces of a good spirit; but they had such divine transports and solid assurances before their exits, as eminently attended our glorious British martyrs." [Rees' *Inf. Bap. no Inst. of Christ*, p. 220.] In confirmation of this last remark, it may be proper to insert the testimony of Cardinal Hosius, their great persecutor.--"If the truth of a religion were to be judged of by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer than that of the anabaptists; since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more grievously punished, or that have been more fully and stedfastly undergone, and even offered themselves, unto the most cruel punishments than those people." [Stennett against Addington, Part II. p. 268.]

SECT. 8.--Baptists persecuted by Protestants.

When we consider that the baptists, in all ages, have attacked the main pillars of popery, by maintaining--that the holy scripture is the sole rule of faith and practice in religious concerns--that Christ is the supreme and only Head of the church--and that whoever usurps authority in it rebels against him and antichrist; we cannot be surprized that the papists should be highly exasperated against them. We sincerely wish that we could stop there, and leave the catholics loaded with the whole disgrace of persecuting the baptists: but justice requires us to state, that the protestants must share in the odious burthen.

Wickliff, Huss, Jerome, and others, had prepared the way for the reformation by exposing the errors of the church of Rome: and Luther, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, favoured by a conjuncture of circumstances, carried it forward with unexpected rapidity. He appealed to the Bible, as the only standard of religion and boldly maintained the right of every man to read and understand it for himself. His doctrines spread, and soon embraced by many kingdoms and states; who protestant against the errors and usurpations of Rome, and thence obtained the name of protestants.

Many of the most famous leaders of the dissenters, had expressed themselves with sufficient clearness on the distinguishing tenets of the baptists. They had acknowledged, that baptism signifies immersion, and that believers are the proper subjects. It might, therefore, have been expected, either that they would have declared themselves baptists; or, at least, that they would have cherished those who acted on their own principles. But, whether they found it more prudent to leave a subject so closely interwoven with the prejudices and passions of men untouched; or whether they changed their views respecting this ordinance; certain it is, that many of the leading men among the reformers declared, at last, in favour of infant baptism.--Too certain it is, also, that no sooner had they gained the protection of the civil power, and an influence over civil governors, than they all, whatever mode of discipline they embraced, whether episcopal, presbyterian or independent, endeavoured to impose their opinions on those who differed from them either in principle or practice. It may excite surprise, that an inconsistency to their fundamental tenets, so glaring, should have been so universally prevalent. But religious liberty was then very imperfectly understood. The degrading fetters of papal tyranny had so benumbed the human mind, that they could not, except by slow degrees, expand it to its proper dimensions, or act with its native energy. To this, and not to any thing hostile to truth or liberty in the systems or the hearts of these good men, do we ascribe the inconsistency to which we have alluded. Abundant evidence might be brought of the existence of this disgraceful inconsistency on the continent; but as we shall meet with too many painful examples of persecuting protestants in tracing the history of the English General Baptists, we shall only notice one remarkable instance of tyranny, in a country noted for the love of liberty.

In the protestant canton of Zurich, in Switzerland, an edict was published, in 1525, commanding all persons to baptize their children and to forbear rebaptizing, on pain of fines and imprisonment: and, in 1526, Zuinglius, one of the reformers at that city, passed this sentence on Felix Mans--"He that rebaptizes, let him be drowned:" upon which that worthy minister was drowned. [Brandt's *Hist. of Ref.* Vol. Book II.] In 1530, a second edict was published at Zurich, by which adult baptism was made a capital offence; and,

by authority of these edicts, ten baptists were put to death in that town, in less than four years. They then declined public executions; but cruelly starved seven of the same persuasion to death in prison; and confined five others, till death released them. [Danvers, pp. 264, 265.]

CHAPTER II.

The Progress of the Gospel, and Traces of Baptists in England, previous to the Reformation.

SECT. 1--From the Introduction of the Gospel, and Traces of the Baptists in England, Previous to the Reformation.

When the gospel of Christ was first preached, in this favoured isle, is not easy to determine.--Many respectable writers place this important event in the apostolic age; and suppose, that some of the apostles either came in person, or sent their companions, into Britain. Be that as it may, there appears sufficient evidence, that about A.D. 180, Lucius, who then reigned in Britain, sent to Eleutherius, the bishop of Rome, to request that he would assist him in propagating the christian religion among his subjects. In compliance with this request, Eleutherius sent two holy men to instruct the Britons. The missionaries from Rome were zealous, active, and successful. They soon baptized the king; and the principal part of the nation followed his example: so that the country appears to have been in a great measure rescued from the worship of idols.[Fox's *Acts and Mon.* I. p. 118.] There is good authority for saying that, in 182, there was a school of learning, to provide the British churches with proper teachers. [Usher *de Antiquitate Eccl. Brit.* pp. 69, 70.]

This happy island afforded an asylum for banished christians, during the first nine general persecutions: as none of them reached it. But the tenth, raised by Dioclesian, about the year 301, was felt severely by the British churches. In this dreadful persecution, Albanus, the first English martyr, Aaron, Amphibalus and Julius, all eminent British christians, sealed the truth with their blood, at Verolamium, since called St. Alban's, from Albanus. At this time, christianity was almost driven out of the whole island; the churches were subverted; the books of the scripture were burned; and many faithful christians, both men and women, slain. [Fox I. p. 98.]

After this persecution, the christians in Britain appeared to have flourished in peace, during the government of the Romans. But the great numbers of troops drawn from expeditions of their conquerors, weakened both the church and state; and left England, when forsaken by the Romans, a prey to the idolatrous Picts and Scots. These barbarous nations dreadfully harassed, and cruelly persecuted, the Britons. When these neighboring enemies were driven out by the Saxons, whom the Britons had invited to their assistance, they only changed their oppressors. The Saxons were, at this time, bigotted heathens, and seized every opportunity of proving their hatred to christianity and its professors. The devastation made among the British churches was terrible. "From the east to the west," says Gildas, an eminent writer who lived near those times, "nothing was to be seen but churches burnt or destroyed to their very foundations. The inhabitants were extirpated by

the sword, and buried in the ruins of their own houses. The altars were daily profaned with the blood of those slain thereon." [Crosby, II. pref. xvii.] The professors of christianity, in generation, either fell victims to the fury of their enemies, or were driven to seek shelter in neighbouring countries. Many of them retired into the mountains of Wales, and maintained their religion. These cruel persecutions so completely oppressed christianity, that for forty-four years previous to the arrival of Austin, it was nearly extinct in all the island. The Saxons were established in the government, and the British christians either sealed the truth with their blood, or were driven into exile.

We the rather mention these particulars, as there is good reason to believe that these primitive christians were baptists.--That they baptised by immersion is allowed by all parties: and, that they did not practise infant baptism will soon appear.

About the year 596, Ethelbert, the fifth monarch of the Saxon kingdom of Kent, though himself a pagan, married Bertha, a French christian. It was agreed, in the marriage articles, that the queen, and her bishops, who accompanied her, should be allowed the freedom of their religion. This opened the way for the revival of christianity in England. Gregory was the pope. Before his elevation, his compassion had been excited for this country, by observing some interesting English boys exposed for sale in the slave market at Rome. When he obtained the papal dignity, he sent Austin, attended by forty monks, to convert the Anglo-Saxons to christianity. They were courteously received by Ethelbert, who, on account of the virtue of his queen, was favourably disposed to her religion. In a short time he embraced christianity, and numbers of his subjects followed his example.-- So great was the number of converts, that, Austin is said to have baptized ten thousand in one day in the river Swale, in Yorkshire. [Fox I. p. 128, &c.] The new christians submitted to the authority of Rome; the churches were rebuilt; and Austin was made by his patron the pope, the first archbishop of Canterbury. [Ibid. 132.]

Austin had not laboured long in England, before he formed the design of bringing under his authority the native British churches. These appear to have increased in their retreat into Wales; and were now considerable, both for numbers and piety. But, as they had received their doctrines and practices from the first preachers of christianity, they differed, in many respects, from those of the church of Rome, which, at the close of the sixth century, was, greatly corrupted.

Austin, therefore, by means of Ethelbert, procured a conference with the ministers of the British churches, at a place on the borders of Wales, since called Austin's Oak. In this assembly he exhorted them to reform certain rites and usages in their church, after the manner of the church of Rome. The Britons refused to comply, and the meeting terminated without any agreement. [Fox, ut supra.]

Some time after this, Austin had another, conference, which was attended by seven bishops of Britain; and the wisest men of the famous Abbey of Bangor. These monks of Bangor, as they are usually, though improperly, called, were the descendants of those persecuted christians who had fled from England to avoid the fury, of the Picts and Saxons; and had settled in this part of Wales. Here they formed a society; and, like the

primitive christians, had everything in common. They laboured with their hands for their support: and their piety and happiness induced numbers to join them. At this time, they are said to have amounted to upward of two thousand. The leaders of this society, in compliance with Austin's invitation, attended the conference; but, on entering the assembly, observed that Austin kept his seat, and made not the least advance to receive them. This haughty behaviour rendered them less disposed to listen to his demand of a general conformity and obedience to the pope. To this the abbot of Bangor, by name Dino, boldly replied, "That the ancient christians of this island were obedient and subject to the church of God, and to the pope of Rome, and to every godly christian, to love every one in his degree in perfect charity, and to help every one, by word and deed, to be children of God: and other obedience than this he knew not to be due to him whom he called the pope." Austin, finding he could not hope for a general submission, thought proper to lower his demands; and required their compliance in three things:--To keep Easter, according to the Romish ritual:--to give christendom to their children;--and to preach the word of God to the English. [Fabian's *Chronicle*, p. 90, &c.] These old baptists, however, with a steadiness and decision that did honour to their cause, refused, peremptorily, to yield at all to the papal archbishop. His indignation was roused; and he told them, "If they would not take peace with their brethren, they should receive war of their enemies: and that if they disdained to preach with them the way of life to the English nation, they should suffer, by their hands, the revenge of death." Perhaps it was well for these Bangor nonconformists that Ethelbert had learnt that "the faith and practice of christianity is to be voluntary, not coerced;" otherwise they might have been compelled to conform. [Fox, ut supra.]

It was not long, however, before these predictions were fatally accomplished. Whether the disappointed prelate had any concern in procuring or hastening the dreadful event, is not, at this distance of time, perhaps, easy to determine. Probably he had not; though many learned men have strongly suspected the contrary.--Not long after this conference, Ethelfride, a pagan king of Northumberland, laid siege to Chester: and was opposed by Brockmaile, a prince friendly to the Britons. During the engagement, the monks of Chester, who with others formed the famous society at Bangor, came out of their monastery, to pray for the success of their ally and champion. They continued three days in fasting and prayer; till, at length, their proceedings, being observed by Ethelfride, he was informed of their object. When, therefore, he had conquered the unarmed monks: observing, that though they had no weapons, they fought against him by their prayers. The pagan soldiers executed with pleasure the cruel orders of their general: and eleven, or as some assert, twelve hundred, of these pious christians were slain on the spot. Indeed, so complete was the destruction, as all authors agree, that scarce fifty escaped. [Fox, ut supra.] The college they inhabited was demolished, and their library, more precious than gold, consumed with fire. "And thereupon," says an ancient writer, "that faith which had endured in Britain, for near four hundred years, became nearly extinct throughout the land." [Fabian.] This appears to have been the last stand made in these islands, and perhaps in Europe, against the usurpations of the Man of sin: the whole nation, in a short time, sunk under his influence.

We are well aware, that the paedobaptists have endeavoured to insinuate, that the dispute between Austin and these ancient Britons regarded the manner, not the subjects of baptism. But they can produce no evidence that, in the commencement of the seventh century, there existed any difference between the church of Rome and the administering this ordinance:--both, as they candidly confess baptised by immersion. And had the ordinance been clogged with many of the ceremonies added afterwards, Austin could have hardly have baptized ten thousand in one day. The instances of Constantine the great, and others, prove that believers' baptism was practised in England the opposite custom had obtained considerable footing on the continent. And it is evident that the question of baptizing infants was agitated here, at that time: as one of the difficult cases, sent by Austin for the pope's solution, was, "How long a child may be left unbaptized, if there is no present danger of death?"—A proof that some were willing to defer it as long as possible. It is urged, on the contrary, that in some copies of Fabian, Austin's second proposition is stated thus--"That ye give christendom to the children, in the manner that is used in the church of Rome." [In the first edition of Fabian's Chronicle, the sentence has this additional clause, which is omitted in the two succeeding editions. Perhaps it was found to be wanting in the original copy, and was therefore dropt.] This must be granted; but it does not affect the question. The natural sense would still be, that they should, like the Romanists, make their children members of the church of Christ by baptism. Had the dispute respected only the mode of baptism, the expression would most probably have been, "That ye give christendom according to the manner used in the church of Rome."--It is also objected, that Pelagius, a native of Britain, asserted, two hundred years before the massacre of the Bangor monks, that he never had heard of any one, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants: from which it is very reasonably concluded, that his countrymen practised infant baptism. If such an assertion was made by Pelagius, it could only have been an unguarded expression, which escaped him in the heat of controversy: for he could not be ignorant, that many, before his time, had opposed infant baptism. It does not, however, appear, that Pelagius ever made this assertion. His words are, that "Men do slander him, as if he denied the sacrament of baptism to infants, and did promise the kingdom of God to any without the redemption of Christ:" and it is most probable that he had never heard the most impious heretic say, that the kingdom of God could be obtained without the redemption of Christ. [See. Dr. Gill's *Argument from Apost. Trad. considered*, pp. 19-25. Wall's *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part I. Cap. xix. Sec. 30.]

SECT. 2--From Austin to the death of Wycliffe; or from AD. 600 to A.D. 1400.

There is little information respecting the state of religion in England, during the dark ages of popery. Very few traces of the baptists can be discovered in this country, prior to the time of Wickliff. But as we have already shewn that they existed on the continent, in every age, there can be little doubt but their doctrines and practice had some adherents in these islands. One or two facts render this more than probable.

In the year 1070, Lanfranc was made the archbishop of Canterbury, by William the Conqueror. He wrote against Berengarius; and, in particular, defends infant baptism against the attacks of that reformer. He declares, that, by denying infant baptism, Berengarius opposes the general doctrine and universal consent of the church. [Danvers,

p. 243.] This is a presumption that there were those in this country who opposed that practice: else why should an archbishop beat the air!-It is likely that among the number of foreigners, who had accompanied or followed the Conqueror, there were some who had imbibed the tenets of that reformer: especially as we have the authority of a very ancient historian, who says that the Berengarian heresy corrupted all Italy, France, and England; and of another, that not only the meaner sort in the country, but the nobility and gentry in the chief towns, were infected with it. [Ibid. p. 276.] This sect appears to have gained considerable ground in the three following reigns.

In 1158, Henry II. summoned a council at Oxford, to examine the doctrines of certain heretics, called Publicani, who, it appears, were spreading their errors throughout the nation. Being interrogated on certain articles of faith, they are stated to have said perverse things concerning the divine sacraments, detesting holy baptism, &c.: that is, they asserted, as credible writers affirm, that infants are not to be baptised till they come to the age of understanding. They were all burnt in the foreheads, and, being driven out of the realm, were afterwards slain by the pope. The names of their leaders were Gerhardus and Dulcinus. [Fox, Vol. I. p. 282.]

The reigns of Richard I. and John were times of great civil disorder. Richard's long absence from his dominions, and John's frequent quarrels with the pope and his own subjects, afforded greater facilities for spreading, the truth than could have been enjoyed, in those times of tyranny and persecution, had the government been firmly settled. John, for political reasons, espoused the cause of the Waldenses; who, at that time, were grievously oppressed in France. It was, therefore, to be expected, that many of that persuasion would settle in England. This was the case. In 1235, the pope sent the friars Minorites into England to suppress the Waldensian heresy:--which shews that it had then many adherents in this country.

The two succeeding kings appear to have connived at the heretics, as all that opposed popery were then called. About the year 1315, Walter Lollard, a famous Waldensian minister, came over into England; and was so successful in making proselytes, that all who differed from the church of Rome were called after his name: and Lollards, for many ages, became the common appellation of dissenters.

In the reign of Edward III. A.D. 1371, the great John Wickliff began to oppose the errors of popery. He translated the scriptures into the English language; and asserted that they were the only rule of faith and practice: declaring that wise men leave that as impertinent which is not plainly expressed in scripture: and that Christ's law sufficeth by itself to govern Christ's church. He taught, that baptism doth not confer, but only signifies grace given: and that unless persons are baptized in the blood of Christ, their baptism in water profits nothing to the salvation of their soul. He was accused by the papists of asserting, that none were members of the church visible who were not members of the church invisible: and that none lead a right to church membership who did not make a public profession of faith in Christ. One papist writer says, that Wickliff positively asserted that infants were not to be sacramentally baptized:--and another mentions him among a number of others who bore witness against infant baptism. Whether this venerable

harbinger of the Reformation actually followed up his own principles so far as to lay aside the baptizing of infants, and to declare it unscriptural, is not easy to determine. Those that, forty-one years after his death, took up his bones and burnt them, did not neglect to destroy his more formidable remains, his writings. These were condemned by a general council; every body was forbidden to read or conceal them, under great penalties; and, in 1410, a strict search being made for them in England and Bohemia, above two hundred volumes of his works were committed to the flames. [Fox, Vol. I. p. 749. Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* p. 482.] It is therefore, by no means certain that we are acquainted with all his sentiments. In one of his earlier works, which escaped the fate of the rest, he seems to favour infant baptism; but, as he pursued his enquiries, he might see reason to change his opinion. This, however, is plain, that if he maintained the sentiments, already stated, and continued to practise infant baptism, his principles and his practice were inconsistent. But this supposition is, by no means, consistent with the decision of character, and integrity of conduct, which distinguished that great and good man. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 1-16.]

SECT. 3.—From Wickliff to the death of Queen Elizabeth: or, from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1600.

The followers of Wickliff in England were called Lollards, and for nearly two centuries were exposed to great persecution. In 1400, William Sawtre, the first that was burnt for heresy in England, suffered death in London. There is some reason to suppose that he was a baptist. [Hook's *Apology*, pref.] In the year 1422, William Taylor, whom Fox calls a constant witness-bearer of Christ's doctrine, was burnt at Smithfield, for Lollardism. This sect, notwithstanding, spread rapidly, especially in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. In 1428, a commission was granted to suppress Lollardism; in virtue of which upwards of one hundred and twenty persons were apprehended, in less than four years. Fox has preserved their names; and the heresies of which they were accused. [Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, Vol. I. p. 749-758. This author supposes that the tenets of these Lollards were misrepresented; but contemporary writers confirm the fact, that the immediate followers of Wickliff held, that the infants of believers are not to be sacramentally baptized. Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 23,24.]

One of these is, "that infants are sufficiently baptized if their parents be baptized before them: and that if they died without baptism they might be saved."—A decisive proof that these Lollards opposed infant baptism. Nor was this opinion confined to a few individuals. The whole sect were, in a remarkable manner, agreed in sentiment. "Whatsoever one did hold," says the Martyrologist, "all the other did maintain and hold the same." From this concord in opinion, he supposes they all received their instruction from the same minister, William White; who, having been a scholar and companion of Wickliff, retired into Norfolk; and there preached the gospel. He was burnt, at Norwick, September 1424. About the same time, Father Abraham, of Colchester, and John Wadden a priest, suffered martyrdom in a similar manner. Many of those that were apprehended were condemned to perform public penance; others were privately scourged; and the rest suffered various smaller punishments.

The public penance, enjoined on these heretics by the bishop of Norwick, was, to walk, before a solemn procession, on six successive Sundays, round the parish church, in their shirts and drawers, with their heads, necks, feet, and legs uncovered, each carrying a lighted taper, weighing one pound, in his hand; and humbly and devoutly to receive from the hands of the priests, during each circuit, a disciplining, that is, a flogging: also on three market days to walk, in a similar manner, round the market-place: in each circuit to make four pauses; and, at each pause, to receive with similar humility and devotion, from the same holy hands, a like correction: and, to crown the whole, when they had finished the last procession, to offer their tapers, in the midst of high mass, to the high altar in the parish church. This was the common penance prescribed to heretics; except that they frequently carried a faggot instead of a taper. [See the bishop's Letter, Fox, Vol. I. p. 753, col. 2.] It appears from a manuscript register of Gray, bishop of Ely, that, in the year 1457, there was a congregation of baptists at Chesterton, near Cambridge, who assembled privately for divine worship, and had teachers of their own. Six of them were accused of heresy before the bishop; and condemned to abjure and do penance, half naied, with a faggot in their hands, in the public market places of Ely and Cambridge, and in the church-yard of Great Swaffham. Mr. Robinson has published a few extracts from the manuscript, which contain part of the articles of their accusation. In these they are charged with saying, "that the pope is antichrist--that the priests are his disciples, and that all persons in holy orders are devils incarnate;--that extreme unction is useless--and that children neither have need of baptism, nor ought they to be baptized. [Robinson's Pref. to *Claude's Essay*.]

Though these people were thus cruelly persecuted, and the full power of the civil and ecclesiastical authority was exerted against them, they continued to increase. Laws were passed against them, and they were specially excepted in acts of grace: numbers abjured and several were burnt, in almost every reign, till Henry VIII. Under him they were very numerous; and appear to have been the peculiar object, both of that arbitrary monarch's vengeance, and of the jealousy of the friends of the reformation. Some were burnt, as Lollards, and twenty-two were executed, as anabaptists, in 1535. [Ivimey's *Hist. of Eng. Bap.* p. 83.] In the reign of Edward VI. two anabaptists were committed to the flames. The tender-hearted young prince was very averse to the measure; and when, at the earnest solicitations of archbishop Cranmer, he reluctantly signed the warrant for the execution of Joan of Kent, one of these sufferers, tears stood in his eyes: and he told the prelate, that if he did wrong, since it was in submission to his authority, he should answer for it to God.

There can be no doubt but many baptists severe persecution under the bloody queen Mary. As all inferior distinctions, however, were then lost in the greater ones of papist and protestant; and, as the examinations and accusations generally respected doctrines, equally opposed by every sect of protestants, history does not furnish us with the means of distinguishing the adherents of one persuasion from another. That there were baptists among the sufferers, is evident, from a letter, written by that eminent martyr, John Philpot, to a prisoner who, during their confinement, had applied to him for the solution of some difficulties respecting infant baptism. Mr. Philpot had a remarkable dream, on the night-after he received queries, which greatly encouraged him in answering

the arguments urged by his correspondent against this practice. The letter is curious, and may be seen at large in Fox.

He does not acquaint us with the success of Me. Philpot's arguments, nor the name of his correspondent. [Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, Vol. III. pp. 509-512.]

In the sixteenth year of the reign of her protestant successor, Elizabeth, a congregation of Dutch baptists was discovered in London: of which, twenty-seven were taken and imprisoned.

The next month, one man, and ten women, were condemned. Of these, one recanted, eight were banished out of the land, and two were condemned to be burnt. Mr. John Fox, who has raised a monument to so many martyrs, here interfered; and wrote a most importunate and pathetic letter to the queen, to dissuade her from imitating the papists, in thus "roasting alive the bodies of poor wretches, that offend rather through blindness of judgment than perverseness of will, in fire and flame, raging with pitch and brimstone." But though Elizabeth used to call this venerable divine, her Father Fox, she gave him a positive denial: and the two baptists were burnt in Smithfield, July 22nd. But this severity did not crush the sect. It continued to increase; and towards the close of her reign, Elizabeth issued a proclamation, which all anabaptists, and other heretics, were ordered to leave the kingdom, on pain of imprisonment and loss of goods. In consequence of this strong measure, many dissenters withdrew into Holland; and among them not a few baptists, both English and Dutch. [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 79.] In that country, they had liberty to profess their opinions without restraint: and we shall have occasion to observe, in the next book, the use which they made of this privilege.

SECT. 4.--The Progress of the Doctrine of Predestination, and of the Practice of Sprinkling.

How many of these worthy men, who, during the long night of popery, from age to age thus opposed infant baptism, were general baptists, is not easy to determine. The disputes about personal election and reprobation, concerning which principally the general baptists differ from their other baptist brethren, appear, not to have been known, during many of the first centuries. Augustin was, perhaps, the first who, in the heat of his controversy with Pelagius, introduced the idea of some absolute decree of the Almighty, which fore-ordained all events, and determined the everlasting conditions of men. The schoolmen puzzled themselves about these decrees, but could by no means agree. Luther, who was an Augustin monk, followed the opinion of the founder of his order, in which he was opposed by many great men. At last, Calvin undertook to new-model the doctrine, and made 60 several additions to the tenets of his predecessors. But these disputes appear, before the Reformation, to have been confined, in a great measure, to the schools; and seldom engaged the attention of the people. Indeed, by making salvation to depend on baptism, which might or might not be administered according to the decision of man, the catholics set aside all idea of a particular predestinating decree; and the noble advocates for truth, to whom we have alluded, by adhering to the scripture declaration that "whosoever believeth shall be saved," certainly had no necessity of adverting to it. Had,

therefore, these good men asserted, ever so clearly, the universal extent of our Saviour's atonement, it would neither have excited the opposition of their contemporaries, nor roused the indignation of their adversaries, like their opposition to infant baptism. It would have been considered a mere speculative question, have been understood by few in those days of darkness, and excited little interest. As to the question respecting infant baptism, the case was totally different.--It regarded daily practice, Every parent and guardian was necessarily called upon to determine the point for himself. All, therefore, became interested in it: and, as it has been generally believed, that whosoever died unbaptized must inevitably be eternally miserable; when any ventured to assert, that infants had no title to that ordinance, the tenderest feelings of humanity were engaged against him: and he was regarded as a murderer of the souls of babes and sucklings, by depriving them of the visible seal of salvation. Thus he became the peculiar object of popular odium: and the term inhuman, impious, and immoral.

We shall close this chapter with a brief view of the progress of the change from immersion to sprinkling.

It is generally allowed, that the usual mode of baptism, amongst the primitive christians was by immersion; nor do we read of any instance of a different practice till A.D. 251, when Novatian was elected, by a faction, bishop of Rome. He had been baptized, when dangerously ill, by having water poured over him in his bed. This was evidently a new case. Many of his contemporaries expressing great doubt of the validity of his baptism, much investigation ensued: and, eighty years afterwards, it was decreed that persons, baptized in this manner, were ineligible to the ministry. Pouring was occasionally practiced, in France, before the close of the fifth century; and became gradually more frequent, till A.D. 1260; when it was esteemed a more common, proper, and safe mode than immersion. But, so late as 1585, the water was not poured from the hand; but from a ladle kept in the font for this purpose. From France, the custom of pouring spread, though very slowly, into Italy, Germany, and Spain; and at last reached England. In Italy, though affusion, or pouring, was permitted in extreme cases, immersion was the ordinary and approved method, till A.D. 1260: and it was not till some years afterwards, that it was usually laid aside, even by the catholics. In Germany, the council of Cologne, in 1536, directed that the infant should be thrice either dipped or wetted with the water: but, in 1557, the church of Mentz ordered the priest to take water in his hand, three several times, out of the font; and pour it on the child's head, so that the water may wet its head and shoulders.

England was very tenacious of the ancient mode. Though the coldness of our climate has furnished modern paedobaptists with so many arguments against dipping, their hardy predecessors shewed extreme reluctance to lay it aside. It was not till A.D. 816, that the first attempts were made to alter the mode. A council was immediately called, which published this decree: "Let the priests know, that, when they administer holy baptism, they must not pour water on the head of the infant; but it must always be dipt in the font." Erasmus, in the reign of Henry VIII. Frith, in 1533, and Watson, the popish bishop of, Lincoln, under queen Mary, unite in representing dipping as the usual mode of baptism in England, in their respective ages. In the common prayer-book, printed 1549, the child is

directed to be dipped three times in the water. Here occurs, indeed, the caution--"If the child be weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it." This opened the door for innovation. The children of the rich, and, by degrees, the children of the lower orders, were excused from being dipped, under the pretence of weakness. Calvin, Beza, Whitaker and other eminent men among the reformers, about this time, declared their opinion, that it was indifferent whether baptism was administered by immersion or pouring. These causes operated so much, that, towards the close of the reign of queen Elizabeth, immersion was nearly laid aside. The presbyterian Directory appeared, in 1644, declaring it not only lawful, but most expedient, to use pouring or sprinkling. This was going farther than the church of England has ventured. She still orders the child to be dipt, unless it be certified that it is weak.

But these changes in the mode of baptism took place only in the western parts of Europe. The Greek church, in all its branches, has always practised immersion, and continues this practice to the present day. So late as 1745, the Russians, who are a part of the Greek church, would not admit sprinkling to be valid baptism. In that year, when Sophia Augusta, who had been sprinkled by protestants in her infancy, was espoused to the Czar Peter III. she was baptized, by immersion, according to the rites of the Greek church. And it appears evident, if we survey the whole christian world, that no country, except such as are, or have been under the authority of the pope, has adopted sprinkling as baptism. [Wall's *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part II. pp. 290-306.]

It is, perhaps, worthy of remark, that the corruption of the ordinance of baptism, both as it regards the subject and the mode, has been gradual. The primitive christians baptized only such as made a credible profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to him. In a short time, youths, who had gone through a regular course of instruction, were thought proper subjects. Then young children, who could repeat a few formularies learnt by rote, were admitted to baptism. At last, it was administered to infants of only a few days old.-- Thus, also, the original manner of baptizing was, as is confessed by all competent judges, by plunging the subject into the water:: and, long after the subject was changed, infants were actually dipt in the font. Pouring water on the infant from the hand or from a ladle, in a quantity sufficient to wet the upper parts of the body, was, by slow degrees, substituted for immersion. At length, sprinkling a few drops, from the tips of the fingers, on the face of the infant, was called baptism. Surely, when a sacred rite is so deeply sunk, those who endeavour to restore it to its original standard deserve well of every friend of the divine Institutor. Many eminent paedobaptists, especially among the clergy of the established church, have frequently expressed their strong desire that the practice of immersion might be restored. Among these, Mr. Wall, that laborious advocate for infant baptism, ranks himself. [*Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part II. p. 308.] Every baptist would certainly rejoice to see so material a part of the dispute fairly conceded; but whether that author's conjecture, that more join the baptists because they were sprinkled, than because it was done in infancy, be well founded, may be doubted. It is, however, to be feared, from the temper of the present age, that we shall not soon have an opportunity to make the experiment.

BOOK II.
THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS, FROM
THE REFORMATION TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CHAP. I.
THE RISE OF THE GENERAL BAPTISTS, AND THEIR
PROGRESS, TO THE RESTORATION.

SECT. 1.--The Formation of the English Baptist Church in Holland.

It has been stated, that queen Elizabeth, towards the close of her reign, ordered all Nonconformists to leave the kingdom. Upon this occasion, numbers of good men went over to Amsterdam, in Holland; and formed themselves into a separate church, under the care of Mr. Johnson as pastor, and Mr. Ainsworth as teacher. Here they flourished some time in peace and were joined by many of their countrymen, who left England to preserve a good conscience. Among others, John Smyth* went over to Holland, in the beginning of the reign of James I. He appears to have enjoyed a liberal education. In the former part of his life he was a clergyman of the established church, and beneficed at Gainsborough in Lincolnshire. In that station, he gained the esteem of his brethren of the establishment, and engaged in defence of the church against separatists. Bishop Hall informs us, that he published a piece, on the Lord's prayer, in which he confuted some of the positions of the sect which he afterwards joined. [Bishop Hall's Works, Vol. IX. p. 458, Note.] The nonconformists, or separatists, as they were then called, were numerous in his neighbourhood: and Mr. Smyth was no unconcerned observer of their conduct. By degrees, he began to disapprove of several things in the discipline and ceremonies of the church, which led him to seek for satisfaction. He spent nine months in examining the points in debate; and held frequent conferences with several eminent divines on the subject of conformity. His investigation issued in a confirmation of his former doubts; and, in compliance with the dictates of his conscience, he resigned his station, his emoluments, and his prospects in the establishment, and joined those persecuted people, whom he had formerly opposed. The importance of such a convert was duly appreciated by his new associates: and he was soon called to be pastor of a church in his native country. But, being grievously harassed by the High Commission Court, and seeing no prospect of redress from the new monarch, Mr. Smyth and his church, and Messrs. Robinson and Clifton,, who were co-pastors of a neighbouring church, with their congregation, determined to leave the kingdom, and seek liberty of conscience in a foreign country. They arrived in Holland, They arrived in Holland in ----, and all joined Mr. Ainsworth's society; which received such an addition with peculiar satisfaction. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 91, &c. 265, &c.--Brook's *Lives*, Vol. III, p. 195, &c.]

[* Mr. Brook, who has dignified this minister, we know not on what authority, with the title of M.A. seems to confound him with a Mr. Smith, who was severely persecuted, in

1592, for nonconformity. But as this John Smith was the oldest of thirty-one persons who were apprehended, on the same charge, in 1567, it is hardly probable, that, forty years afterwards, he should have taken so active a part in the emigration to Holland. Brook's *Lives of the Puritans*, Vol. III. p. 195.--Neal's *Hist. of Puritans*, Vol. I. pp. 162, 366.]

In this emigration, Mr. Smyth appears to have been the chief actor, and the leading man. How highly he was esteemed by his friends of the separation is evident, from the professions of Mr. Clifton, who wrote against him on the subject of baptism: "With great sorrow," says he, "I am forced to undertake this business against him that was dear to me; against him to whose charge both I and divers others had once purposed to have committed our souls." [Smyth's *Character of the Beast*, p. 2.] Bishop Hall calls him, Mr. Robinson's leader, guide, general, and oracle: and apologizing for having addressed a former letter to Mr. Smyth and Mr. Robinson, he says, "Perhaps I should have endorsed it to Mr. Smyth, and his shadow: for such I perceive he was." [Bp. Hall's *Works*, Vol. IX. pp. 384, 401, 458, 466.] When we consider that Mr. Robinson was a divine of considerable note in those days, and the father of the independents, it is evidence that Mr. Smyth stood high in the estimation of this good prelate; and confirms the assertion of another writer, that he was accounted one of the grandees of the separation. [Pagitt's *Heresiography*, p. 75.]

Mr. Smyth, being now at leisure to consult the scriptures, and in a country where he might pursue his inquiries, and divulge the result, without danger, proceeded with redoubled zeal in the search of truth. He soon found reason to disapprove of the practice of his associates, in various points relating to the worship, and discipline of a church of Christ: and avowed his disbelief of the doctrine of personal election and reprobation. Considerable disputes ensued among the leaders of the separation: and they were quickly increased by a difference of a more interesting nature.

In reviewing the subject of separation, Mr. Smyth discovered, that he and his friends acted inconsistently in rejecting the ordination received from the church of England, because they esteemed her a false church; and yet retaining her baptism as true baptism. This led him to examine the nature and ground of baptism: and he perceived, that neither infant, baptism, nor sprinkling, had any foundation in scripture.--With his usual frankness, he was no sooner convinced of this important truth, than he openly professed and defended his sentiments. He urged the inconsistency of their practice on his former associates so clearly, that the bishop before mentioned, tells Mr. Robinson, "There is no remedy; you must go forward to anabaptism, or come back to us: all your Rabbins cannot answer the charge of your rebaptized brother, (Mr. Smyth.) If we be a true church, you must return: if we be not, (as a false church is no church of God) you must rebaptize. If our baptism be good, then is our constitution good." "He tells you true:--your station is unsafe: either you must forward to him or back to us." [Hall's *Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 400, 384.]

This alarmed those with whom Mr. Smyth held communion, and they cast him out of the church. Perhaps good order required this: as it is certainly very desirable, that, those who are united in such a society should, as much as possible, agree in sentiments respecting

points of importance. But these good men, though they, had been driven from their native country by persecution, entertained very contracted notions of religious liberty. They persecuted Mr. Smyth with the most virulent rancour. The laws of the country, in which they had found an asylum, did, indeed, restrain their resentment to words; but they loaded him, and his opinions, with every kind of reproach; and endeavoured to render both his person and doctrine the object of general abhorrence. They charged him with many enthusiastic opinions, which they have not been able to prove that he held. They reviled him as a man of a wolfish nature, whom God had struck with blindness; a brute beast, &c. But these ravings, in the estimation of sensible observers reflected more disgrace on themselves than on their adversary. [Crosby, ut supra.]

Mr. Smyth was a man not to be frightened with words. He appears to have possessed superior natural parts, accompanied with a resolution and spirit that despised opposition. He wrote several treatises in defence of his opinions, and boldly preached what he thought to be the doctrines of inspiration. In short time, several were converted to his sentiments: and their numbers increasing rapidly, he formed them into a distinct church, chiefly, if not wholly, composed of exiles from his own country. This appears to have been the first baptist church, composed of Englishmen, after the Reformation. It was formed about 1607 or 1608: above twenty years prior to 1633, when the church under the care of Mr. Spilsbury, which Mr. Crosby reckons the first baptist church, was organized. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 94, 268, 147.]

It seems, that Mr. Smyth and his friends were put to some difficulty, in reviving the practice of immersion. He, and all his disciples, had been sprinkled in their infancy; and therefore, according to their new views, were unbaptized. There were, indeed, many churches in Holland, who practised immersion; but, as they differed widely in sentiment from him, he did not choose to receive baptism from them. This completely refutes Dr. Mosheim's supposition, that the English baptists derived their origin from the German and Dutch Mennonites: and that, in former times, they adopted their doctrine in all its points. [*Eccl. Hist.* Vol. IV. p. 478.] On the contrary, we see that the first English baptists, of which we have any regular account after the reformation, although living in the midst of the Dutch Mennonites, declined receiving baptism from them, on accounting of their difference of opinion in many important points. "The foreign anabaptists," says Crosby, were such as denied Christ's having taken flesh of the Virgin Mary, the lawfulness of magistracy, and such like, which Mr. Smyth and his followers looked upon as great errors, so that they could not be thought by him proper administrators of baptism." [Vol. I. p. 267.] This obliged Mr. Smyth to consider of some other means of reviving the ordinance. What method he took is not very clearly stated. It is most probable, that those who were convinced of the duty of believers' baptism, first formed themselves into a church, and then appointed two of their number, (perhaps Mr. Smyth and Mr. Helwisse) to baptize each other, and afterwards to baptize the rest. [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 95, &c.] This subject caused considerable uneasiness and reproach to the first baptists, after the Reformation, both general and particular. A similar difficulty occurred at the formation of the original baptist church in America, by Mr. Roger Williams, who had recourse to the same expedient: [Ivimey's *Hist. of Eng. Bap.* p. 562.] and we shall find, in the sequel of this history, that the good men in Leicestershire, in the middle of the

last century, when placed in similar circumstances, adopted the same method. Mr. Smyth appears to have laboured with diligence and success. His followers increased so rapidly as to alarm the paedobaptists. They exerted themselves strenuously in defence of infant baptism; asserting, as the occasion of their conduct, the great success of the contrary opinion, both in England and Holland. [Johnson's *Christian Plea*, Published 1617, p. 23.] An early writer affirms, that "Mr. Smyth and his party do at once as it were swallow up all the separation besides." [Pagit's *Heresiography*, p. 77.] The sentiments professed by these original General Baptists approached very near to the principles on which our new Connection was formed. They maintained the divinity and atonement of our Saviour; but rejected the doctrine of personal and unconditional election and reprobation. The time of Mr. Smyth's death is not recorded. It is most probable that he died in Holland in 1610.

SECT. 2.--An Inquiry into the Sentiments and Character of John Smyth, the Father of English General Baptists.

As this minister has been declared the Founder of the English General Baptists, in several late publications, it may be necessary to ascertain, as far as we can, his real sentiments and character. His contemporaries, and successors, have accused him of holding various opinions, which, if true, would diminish our respect for him: and these accusations have been generally repeated by succeeding authors, without hesitation. But we are happy in being able to give his own explicit contradiction to their reports. In a book*, published within a year of his death, he takes occasion to notice them: and does it in a manner that bespeaks sincerity and decision. "Furthermore," says he, "we desire the separation, and all men, that they would not impute to us untruths; and condemn the innocent without cause. We are indeed traduced to the world by denying the Old Testament and the Lord's day:--as traitors to magistrates, in the Lord's day:--as traitors to magistrates, in denying magistracy: and as heretics, in denying the humanity of Christ."

[* Some time after Mr. Smyth had declared in favour of believers' baptism, Mr. R. Clifton, one of his former associates with whom he had been intimately connected, requested him, by means of Mrs. Byswater, a common friend, to state the grounds of his opinions respecting baptism. With this request Mr. S. thought proper to comply; lest his declining it should be construed into a distrust of his cause. He sent to Mr. C. two propositions: "1. That infants are not to be baptized: and 2. That antichristians converted are to be received into the church by baptism." To establish each of these, he subjoined three brief reasons. Soon after the receipt of these propositions, Mr. C. published a refutation of them, under the title of "An Answer, to Two Anabaptistical Opinions." To this refutation, Mr. S. replied, in a quarto pamphlet of seventy-three close pages, printed in 1609. This he called "The Character of the Beast: or, the false constitution of the church discovered, in certain passages betwixt Mr. R. Clifton and John Smyth, concerning true christian baptism of new creatures, or new born babes in Christ, and false baptism of infants born after the flesh: referred in two propositions. Rev. 13:16.—14:9, 10.—21:5." This work is managed in the syllogistic method: and as Mr. S. repeats the arguments of his opponent previously to his replying to each, it contains the reasonings of both parties. Though this was probably the first published on the subject among Englishmen, after the Reformation, there have been few arguments brought forwards, by

the numberless writers who have since engaged in the controversy, which are not noticed in this pamphlet. It is written with considerable ability, and the dispute is conducted with great address. The only copy of which we have heard, is in the possession of a London Minister: through whose friendship we have been favoured with the perusal. We should be glad to see it republished, with necessary elucidations.]

"Be it known, therefore, to all men, that we deny not the scriptures of the Old Testament; but, with the apostle, acknowledge them to be inspired of God; and that we have a sure word of the prophets, whereunto we ought to attend, as unto a light shining in a dark place: whatsoever is written aforetime is written for our instruction, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope. And that we ought, as Christ counselleth, to search 74 the scriptures of the Old Testament, as the men of Berea did, because that in them we may find everlasting life; and that they do testify of Christ. Yet nevertheless we affirm, that all the ordinances of the Old Testament, that is, the church, ministry, worship, and government of the Old Testament are abolished: all which were types and shadows of good things to come: but the body is in Christ. "Secondly. We acknowledge that, according to the precedent of Christ's disciples and the primitive church, the saints ought, upon the first day of the week, which is called the Lord's day, Rev. 1:10, to assemble together, to pray, prophesy, praise God, and break bread; and perform other [parts of spiritual communion, for the worship of God, their own mutual edification, and the preservation of true religion and piety in the church. And, that we may be better enabled to the aforesaid duties, we ought to separate ourselves from the labours of our callings, which might hinder us thereto.

"Thirdly. Concerning magistrates, we acknowledge them to be the ordinances of the Lord; and that every soul ought to be subject to them; that they are the ministers of God for our wealth; that we ought to be subject to them for conscience' sake; that they are the ministers of God to take vengeance on them that do evil; that we ought to pray for them that are in authority; that we ought not to speak evil of them that are in dignity, not to despise government; but to pay tribute, toll, customs, &c.

"Finally. Concerning the flesh of Christ, we do believe that Christ is the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of David, according to the prophecies of the scriptures; and that he is the son of Mary his mother, made of her substance, the Holy Ghost overshadowing her, (so have, other children their bodily substance from their parents.) Also that Christ is two distinct natures; the Godhead and manhood: and we detest the contrary errors." [*Character of the Beast*, pref.] Though such an explicit and satisfactory explanation requires no comment, it may, perhaps, be useful to remark, that the good men, with whom Mr. Smyth first associated, sought for a supposed analogy between the order and worship of the temple and the synagogue, and the constitution, officers, and discipline of a congregation of christians. By following these analogies too far, they introduced too much of the Jewish hierarchy into their societies; and in a great degree obscured the beautiful simplicity of a New Testament church:--a society of equals, voluntarily associated, to promote the glory of the great Head of the church, by attending to his ordinances and worship, and to advance the good of mankind, by supporting and extending is kingdom among men. Mr. Smyth opposed the introduction of these Mosaic

precedents into the religion of Jesus; and contended that the New Testament was the only source, to which we ought to apply for instruction and direction respecting the nature and order of a church of Christ. Hence his opponents, very unjustly, took occasion to reproach him with denying the Old Testament. [See Johnson's *Christian Plea*, passim.]

He was a steady friend to religious liberty, and an enemy to all spiritual usurpation; whether disguised in the garb of prelacy or presbytery. In exposing it, he sometimes, in compliance with the custom of the age, indulged in a satirical vein, which the politeness, of modern polemics might perhaps condemn. He told the separatists who affected presbytery, that "their constitution was as very a harlot, as either her mother England, or her grandmother Rome: and that the separation was the youngest, and fairest daughter of Rome the harlot." "When the popish prelacy," said he, "was suppressed, and the triformed presbytery of pastors, teachers and elders substituted, one antichrist was put down, and another set up in his place: or the beast was suppressed, and his image advanced. And, therefore, as they that submit to the prelacy are subject to that woe of worshipping the beast; so, they that submit to the triformed presbytery are, in like manner, liable to that woe denounced against men that worship the image of the beast." [*Friendly Debate*, printed 1669, p. 173, from Smyth's *Differences of the Churches of the Separation*.]

After hearing Mr. Smyth's vindication of himself in these essential points, there will be less necessity to spend time in confuting the reports respecting his opinions on less important subjects. We may, however, notice a few. He is charged with asserting that the translations of the scriptures were read with as little grounds in the church as in any homily or prayer of human composition. [*Life of Ainsworth*, prefixed to his *Two Treatises*, p. xxviii.] But when we consider what he says in the passages just quoted, and join to it the twenty-third article of the Confession of faith, of which we shall soon have occasion to speak, we may safely conclude, that, whatever he might say respecting the translation of any, part of the scripture, he by no means meant to depreciate the oracles of truth. He is also charged with disapproving of singing set words or verses, and of escaping persecution by flight. [*Ibid.*] Of the first of these, we have yet seen no proof: and the writer who records it, seems almost disposed to withdraw it. The second appears to have been adopted by his followers after his death, as we shall soon see; and not to have been his sentiment.

Another tenet which he is said to have defended is, that the new creature needeth not the scripture, or ordinances, but is above them. [*Ibid.*] But this is directly denied in the passages already quoted from his last work: and therefore it is certainly the part of equity to suppose that, on this article, he is falsely accused.

This writer also asserts, that Mr. Smyth held that perfection is attainable in the present life. We have not seen any thing in Mr. Smyth's own works on the subject: but it is directly contrary to a tenet ascribed to him by Mr. Robinson, who says that he and his followers maintained that "there is a root of sin yet abiding in us which we cannot pluck up out of our hearts." [Crosby, Vol. I. Appendix, p. 70.]

To these heresies in doctrine, the same author adds, that the bitter intemperate zeal Mr. Smyth shewed, in maintaining his errors, and in abusing his brethren, must have had no small influence in blinding their minds respecting that part of the truth which he appears to have maintained. [*Life of Ainsworth*, p. xlii.] --But this was the fault of the times: and whoever reads this author's treatment of a minister and his followers, who, as he is obliged to confess, were in many respects able advocates for the truth, and of excellent characters, and observing how insidiously he applies to them that awful denunciation of the apostle, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," will perhaps be ready to conclude that abuse and bitter zeal are not, at present, wholly banished from the disputes of theologians. [*Ibid.* p. xxviii. Note.]

Another charge brought against Mr. Smyth is inconstancy and instability in his religious sentiments. Mr. Neal acknowledges that he was a learned man, of good abilities; and ranks him among the leaders of the separatists. But besides his declaring for the principles of the baptists, the tenets of Arminius, and plunging himself, he stigmatizes him with being of an unsettled head. This, he says, appears from the preface of one of Mr. Smyth's books, in which he desires that his last writings may always be taken for his present judgment. [*Hist. of Puritans*, Vol. I. p. 437.] When we consider the deplorable ignorance of the times in which Mr. Smyth began his enquiries, and the gradual development of truth in his researches, we may easily conceive a propriety in such a declaration as this, when writing against capricious opponents; without supposing any improper disposition to instability. A proud idea that our present knowledge is perfect, and an obstinate refusal to change our sentiments, or admit any new illumination, are not, in any circumstances, the marks of wisdom: much less in the times in which these good men were called to act, when the light of scripture truth was only beginning to dawn, and the thick clouds of popish ignorance still darkened the horizon. A tenacious adherence to tenets of once embraced greatly retarded the Reformation; and, in too many instances, totally interrupted its progress. So deeply did this consideration impress the minds of the puritans, that, the formation of the church, in 1616, "they solemnly covenanted with each other, in the presence of Almighty God, to walk together in all God's ways and ordinances, according as he had already revealed, or should further make them." [Neal's *History of the Puritans*, Vol. I. p. 476] It will, however, it is presumed, be interesting to hear Mr. Smyth's own defence of himself, against this charge of instability, which, it seems, was urged against him by his contemporaries. "It may be thought," he says, "most strange, that a man should oft times change his religion; and it cannot be accounted a commendable quality in any man to make many alterations and changes in such weighty matters as are cases of conscience. This must needs be true; and we confess it, if one condition be admitted--that the religion which a man changeth be the truth. For otherwise, to change a false religion is commendable, and to retain a false religion is damnable. For a man of a Turk to become a Jew, of a Jew to become a Papist, of a Papist to become a Protestant, are all commendable changes, though they all of them befall one and the same person, in one year, nay, if it were possible, in one month. So that to change religion is not evil simply: and, therefore, that we should fall from the profession of puritanism to Brownism, and from Brownism to true christian baptism, is not simply evil or reprobable in itself, except it can be proved we have fallen from the true religion. If we, therefore, being formerly deceived in the way of paedobaptistry, do now embrace the

faith in the true christian and apostolic baptism; then let no man impute this as a fault unto us." [*Character of the Beast*, pref.]

Whatever variation had previously taken place in Mr. Smyth's sentiments, he appears to have been settled in his final views of the points in debate. At the close of the work from which the foregoing extracts are made, he says, "Thus through God's providence and blessing, I have come to an happy end of answering your writing; wherein I praise the Lord for his mercy. I have received such assurance of the truth as that you and all the earth shall never be able to wring it out of my heart and hands. I doubt not but I may err in particulars, and I have resolved to be vile before men in confessing my errors; but for the main points in controversy, and the cause I defend, it is the most undoubted and most evident truth that ever was revealed unto me." [Ibid. p. 71]

When Mr. Smyth changed his views respecting predestination and baptism, it drew upon him a host of antagonists. Messrs. Ainsworth, Jessop, Clifton, and Robinson, all took up the pen against him. But, though these were great men, and his former associates, he was in no ways intimidated either with their number or abilities.

"For the separation," he writes, "who are the stiffest and most obstinate adversaries of this truth of the Lord, I could wish, as the tyrant wished concerning the people of Rome, that all their heads were joined into one, and all their strength comprised into one writing, that, with the sword of the spirit, it might be smitted off at once; that so we might have an end of this controversy: and that we might not be troubled and charged with the writing and printing of many books. However that be, we profess our readiness to employ our time and cost for the maintenance of the truth." [*Character of the Beast*. Preface.] His great fear seems to have been, that his opponents would withdraw from the field, and decline the controversy; as appears to have been the case in a former debate. To prevent this he intreats, expostulates, and even challenges.

"As ye love the Lord, and his truth, and the people that depend on you, seek it out and embrace it, and resist it not. If we be in error, shew it unto us. Why? Shall we perish through your default? Will not the Lord require our blood at your hands? Are we not your countrymen? All of us in exile for the common truths we hold against antichrist?-- Answer, we beseech you, in you, in the Lord. If we be in error, it is ignorantly, and of a desire to see the truth, and to fear the Lord. Thus, hoping speedily either to hear an answer to this writing, or to see you yield to the truth, which I unfeignedly ask of the Lord for you, my countrymen, I send this writing the 24th day of March, 1608, N.S. 1609. J. SMYTH." [Ibid.]

But the charge that has been most frequently and most confidently brought against this good man is, to adopt the words of a late author, "his strange and unscriptural conduct, in baptizing himself, without call or example, from which he has been styled a Se-baptist." [*Life of Ainsworth*, p. xlii.] It may, therefore, be necessary to examine a little what evidence there is of the truth of this fact.

It must be granted, that most of the authors who have written of these times, since the middle of the seventeenth century, have confidently asserted this as a fact; but it is not easy to trace it clearly to an earlier date. [Mr. Crosby seems to assert that Mr. Ainsworth and Mr. Jessop, Mr. Smyth's contemporaries, charge him with baptizing himself. Vol. I. pp. 92 and 98; but it is evident, that he states this on the authority of Thomas Hall, in 1669, and he had not himself seen the works of the authors in which the charge is contained.] On the other hand, Bishop Hall, who wrote at the time, and appears to have had an intimate acquaintance with the persons and circumstances, would have seized with avidity a fact like this; yet he never alludes to it:--a strong presumption that no such report was then in circulation. F. Johnson, in his *Christian Plea*, and H. Ainsworth, in his Reply to it, though they frequently mention Mr. Smyth and his sentiments, make no allusion to this circumstance. When we reflect that they were, at first, Mr. Smyth's associates, and afterwards his avowed opponents, it is probable that they either had never heard the report, or knew it to be false.

This is rendered still more probable, by consulting Mr. Smyth's *Character of the Beast*. There was the fairest occasion, in that work, to mention such a circumstance; and yet it does not appear to be alluded to by either party. Mr. Clifton argues from the everlasting covenant made with Abraham and his seed, that the anabaptists, in the baptism of Christ, and devising a new baptism, do bring in a new covenant, and a new gospel; taking upon them to baptize themselves, without warrant from the word. "For I am sure," says he, "that it cannot be, shewed from the word, that any one did ever baptize himself, without special commandment from God ; as Abraham for circumcision, John for baptism, &c." Now it is evident, from these examples, that he did not mean to object to the anabaptists, that each of them baptized himself; but that they introduced a new ordinance, and baptized one another, on their own authority, without any proper warrant from God. For Abraham did not perform the operation of circumcision on himself; and John was then constantly quoted as an instance of an unbaptized administrator. In this sense Mr. Smyth understood him; and, after referring to the proselytes, mentioned Exod. 12:48, replies--"As you, when there was not a true church in the world, took upon you to set up a true church, renouncing the church of antichrist, and yet will not be said to bring in a new covenant or gospel; so the anabaptists, as you call them, do not set up a new covenant or gospel, though they set up the new, or rather the old, apostolic baptism, which antichrist had overthrown. Seeing when all Christ's visible ordinances are lost, then two men joining together may make a church, as you say, why may they not baptize, seeing they cannot conjoin into Christ but by baptism?--If all the commandments of God must be obeyed, then this of baptism: and this warrant is sufficient for assuming baptism. For as both these persons unchurched, yet have power to assume the church, each for himself with others in communion with him, so each of them unbaptized hath power to assume baptism each for himself, with others in communion.--A man cannot baptize himself into the church, himself being out of the church." [*Character of the Beast*, pp. 57-59.]

In this reasoning, it is clear, that Mr. Smyth intends to prove, that, in case of a general apostacy, it is lawful for those, who are convinced of prevailing errors, and have learnt from the scriptures the true nature of the ordinances and church of Christ, to unite and restore them. Nor does this idea of a man's baptizing himself appear to have been at all

entertained. Indeed, though it is most probable, that the report arose from a misunderstanding of some expressions used in this controversy, it is plain, that Mr. Smyth thought, that, in order to restore the ordinance of baptism, two persons at least should unite, and form themselves into a church; and that the administrator ought to be a member of this church: neither of which is consistent with a person's baptizing himself. In perfect conformity with this idea, are the sentiments contained in a book, published by Mr. Smyth's followers, in less than five years after his death. In answer to the question, "Who shall baptize after antichrist's exaltation?" after having disallowed the papist plea of succession, and the notion of the familists of waiting for extraordinary persons to revive the ordinance, they say, "We and others affirm, that any disciple of Christ, in what part of the world soever, coming to the Lord's way, he, by the word and spirit of God, preaching that way unto others, and converting, he may and ought also to baptize them." This they endeavour to prove from the example of John the Baptist, and from the exhortation to every Israelite with whom the Lord was, and whose spirit the Lord had raised, to go and build the house of the Lord, Ezra 1:3,5. [*Persecution Judged and condemned*, p. 42.]

We may, therefore, presume, that the report of Mr. Smyth's baptizing himself originated in mistake: and has been perpetuated by those, who have to hastily taken up a report against their neighbour. It is pleasing, while reviewing these accusations, to observe, that there is nothing alleged against the moral conduct of this good man. In all the changes of his religious sentiments, he appears to have maintained an unblemished character. While he continued a member of the established church, he was highly respected by those with whom he stood connected. When he joined the separatists, his personal excellence obtained their esteem and confidence. And when, in compliance with the dictates of his conscience, he thought it necessary to leave them, they still had nothing against him, except concerning the law of his God. With every opportunity of observing his conduct, and the best disposition to report his failings, they have not cast one blot on his moral character. This is the more to his honour, as his opponents were very forward in publishing the personal faults of each other; and thus exposed themselves and their cause to the reproach of their adversaries. [Pagit's *Heresiography*, p. 64, &c.]

SECT. 3.--The General Baptists publish a Confession of Faith: return to England: are persecuted, and plead for Christian Liberty.

Mr. Helwisse succeeded Mr. Smyth in the charge of the church in Holland: in the formation of which he had been his associate and fellow-labourer. Though his labours and writings were instrumental in making a number of proselytes, yet he met with much opposition. The separatists, whom he had left, attacked him and his tenets with great warmth; calling his party heretics, anabaptists, and free-willers. They charged them confidently with many extravagant notions and practices, with which their own more temperate representations are totally inconsistent. To vindicate themselves from those aspersions, the baptists published, in 1611, a Confession of Faith; accompanied with an appendix, giving some account of Mr. Smyth's last illness and death. It was called, "The Confession of Faith, published in certain Conclusions, by the remainder of Mr. Smyth's company:" and was supposed to have been chiefly drawn up by Mr. Smyth himself.

[Crosby, Vol. I. p. 271.--As it will, doubtless, be satisfactory to our readers to learn the sentiments of these Baptists from themselves, we shall insert the principal articles of this Confession, in the Chapter on the Doctrine and Discipline of the ancient General Baptists, at the close of this Book.]

About 1614, Mr. Helwisse and his friends began to suspect, that, in leaving their native country, and withdrawing into foreign parts, to avoid persecution, they had been actuated by cowardice rather than prudence. They therefore left Holland, and returned to England; and there continued their church, state, and public assemblies as regularly as the intolerant spirit of the times would permit. [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 271.] The nonconformists, who continued in exile, were highly displeased with this decided conduct. They ascribed it to natural confidence rather than spiritual courage; and represented it as openly defying the government and courting persecution. To remove these objections, the baptists took occasion, in a book which they published the following year, to explain the motives of their proceedings. "Fleeing on account of persecution," they say, "hath been the overthrow of religion in this island: the best, able, and greater part being gone, and leaving behind them some few, who, by the others' departure, have had their afflictions and their contempt increased, hath been the cause of many falling back, and of their adversaries' rejoicing. And whereas it is said by some of these flyers, that many of the people of God fled into foreign countries, and that God gave approbation thereof; as Moses, David, and our Saviour Christ in his infancy, and others, thinking thereby to justify this their flight: I answer, God preserved Moses and the rest in their flight till the time was come that he employed them in his service; then in no case would he suffer them to flee. When Moses manifested an exceeding backwardness to the Lord's work, in helping his people out of bondage, using many excuses, the Lord was very angry with him and whither did our Saviour flee when the time was come that he was to shew himself to Israel? If any of these men can prove that the Lord requireth no work at their hands to be done for his glory, and the salvation of thousands of ignorant souls in their own nation, let them stay in foreign countries. After alluding to several passages in the Old Testament, such as Num. 30:11, Judges 5:23, and 21:11, they proceed, "Did God thus respect his work and people then, that all must put to their helping hand, and none must withdraw his shoulder, lest others should be discouraged: and is there no regard to be had thereof, as fear of a little imprisonment, or the like, may excuse any, both from the Lord's work, and for helping their brethren, that, for want of their society and comfort are exceedingly weakened, if not overcome?"

"Great help and encouragement would it be to God's people in affliction, imprisonment, and the like, to have their brethren's presence, to administer to their souls and bodies; and for which cause Christ will say, "I was in prison and ye visited me; in distress, and ye comforted me:" but unto those who do not so, according to their ability, "Go ye cursed." If men had greater love to God's commandment, and the salvation of thousands of ignorant souls in our own country than for want of instruction perish, than a little temporal affliction, they would never publish nor practise as they do on this thing." [*Persecution judged and condemned*, p. 5.] Without venturing to decide between these men and their opponents, it may be observed, that their conduct shewed a great regard for the cause of religion, and a laudable sympathy with their suffering brethren.

This open avowal of their sentiments, and steady continuance at the post of duty, as they esteemed it, exposed the General Baptists to great sufferings. "It was not uncommon," to use their own words, "to lie many years in filthy prisons; in hunger, cold, and idleness; divided from wife, family, and calling; left in continual miseries and temptations, so that death itself would be to many less punishment. Many of them were exposed to want, lost their estates, and were continued in noisome dungeons till death released them." These severities induced them to appeal to their rulers and fellow subjects. In 1615, they published a pamphlet, entitled "Persecution for Religion judged and condemned: in a Discourse between a Christian and Antichristian: proving, by the law of God, and by king James' many declarations, that no man ought to be persecuted for his religion, so he testify his allegiance, by the oath appointed by law." The style of this work is easy, correct, and, considering the age when it was composed, very perspicuous: the reasoning strong and conclusive; and the dialogue well maintained. It presents a favourable specimen of the principles and abilities of the authors. They inveigh against the pride, luxury, and oppression of the bishops; declare their respect for magistrates; protest against the political errors of the papists; condemn those who through fear comply with any external worship, contrary to their own conscience; and refer, for evidence of their sentiments, to the Confession of Faith, published in 1611.

But the principal glory of this piece, is the manly and explicit avowal which the authors, make of the true principles of christian liberty, at a time when they were either unknown or opposed, by almost every other party. They preserve a just distinction between civil and religious concerns; and while they fully allow the magistrate his proper authority in the former, they boldly maintain every man's right to judge and act for himself in the latter. In a dedication to all that truly wish Jerusalem's prosperity, and Babylon's destruction, they declare, "We do unfeignedly acknowledge the authority of earthly magistrates, God's blessed ordinance, and that all earthly rule and command appertain unto them: let them command what they will, we must obey, either to do or to suffer. But all men must let God alone with his right, who is to be Lord and Lawgiver of the soul; and not command obedience for God when he commandeth none." "If I take," says Christian, in another place, "any authority from the king's majesty, let me be judged worthy of my desert; but, if I defend the authority of Christ Jesus over men's souls, which appertaineth to no mortal man, whatsoever, then know you, that whosoever would rob him of that honour which is not of this world, he will tread them under foot.--Earthly authority belongs to earthly kings; but spiritual authority belongeth to that spiritual King, who is King of kings." [*Persecution judged and condemned.* Passm.] When we consider the state of the times, this intrepid and dignified language must excite our just admiration.

That this book was published by the general baptists, is clear from their reference to their Confession of Faith; but it appears to have been sanctioned by all the baptists in England. At the close of the dedication it is subscribed "by Christ's unworthy witnesses, his majesty's faithful subjects, commonly, but most falsely, called Anabaptists." It is probable, indeed, that all the, opposers of infant baptism, at that time, were general baptists, as the particulars are not mentioned till several years after this period. About three years afterwards, in 1618, a piece in defence of believers' baptism was published

under the title of "A plain and well-grounded treatise concerning baptism." It was a translation from the Dutch; and, probably, the work of Mr. Helwisse or some of his friends who had lately returned from Holland. [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 128.--Crosby reckons this the first book published in English against infant baptism; but he had not seen Smyth's *Character of the Beast*.]

SECT. 4.--The Baptists increase--appeal to the Government--are persecuted, and written against.

The baptists still groaned under persecution, which produced its constant effect:--their numbers increased in their affliction. Yet they, thought themselves called upon to take every lawful method to obtain relief; and, in 1620, presented an humble Supplication to king James I. and the parliament for redress. In this, they acknowledged it to be their duty to pray for kings and those in authority; and appealed to God, that it was their constant practice. They represented, in strong terms, the miseries they suffered, by the seizure of their goods, long and painful imprisonments, in various parts of the kingdom, in which many had died, and left their widows and orphans destitute. "The learned [clergy] of this land," they tell his majesty, "procure your temporal sword to persecute us, by casting us into prisons, where many of us have remained divers years, in lingering imprisonments, deprived of all earthly comforts, as wives, children calling, &c. without hope of release, till our God, for the practice of whose commandments we are thus persecuted, persuade the heart of your majesty to take pity on us, our poor wives and children; or his heavenly Majesty to release us by death." They challenge their enemies to convict them of disloyalty to his majesty, or injury to their neighbours; and assert their readiness to obey the law in all civil and temporal things: "But further than that," they say, "we cannot go; because God is the Lord of men's consciences, and only Lawgiver in matters of religion." They suggested to government, that, supposing them in error, the cruelties which they suffered were inconsistent with christianity, the marks of antichrist, and adapted to make hypocrites. They, therefore, humbly besought his Majesty, his nobles, and the parliament, that, according to the direction of God's word, they would let the tares and the wheat grow together till the harvest. To this petition they subjoined ten short chapters, in which they endeavour to prove--that the scriptures are the only rule of faith and not any church, &c.--that the interpreter of this rule is the scripture and Spirit of God in whomsoever--that the Spirit of God to understand and interpret the scriptures is given to every person that fears and obeys God; but not to the wicked--that those that fear and obey God, and so have his Spirit to understand the scriptures, are most commonly the simple, poor, despised, &c.--that the learned in human learning do most commonly err, and know not the truth--that persecution for the cause of conscience is against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the King of kings--against the practice and profession of famous princes--and is condemned by the ancient and later writers, papists and puritans--that freedom of religion would be no prejudice to the commonwealth, but would make it flourish and that kings are not deprived of any power given them by God, when they maintain freedom for cause of conscience. From this abstract of the contents, it is plain, that, the petitioners maintained the same dignified sentiments, and shewed themselves the same undaunted supporters of the sacred rights of conscience, as when they published "Persecution judged, and condemned:" which they took this opportunity of reprinting.

Notwithstanding these sharp persecutions, the baptists gained many proselytes. One of them thought proper to inform his friends of the change that had taken place in his sentiments, and of the ground of his present opinions. With this view, he engaged a principal elder of the separation, most probably Mr. Helwisse, to draw up a letter for him to send to his relations. In this letter, infant baptism is disproved--from the natural inability of infants to confess their sins, believe the gospel, &c. all which the scripture requires as prerequisites to baptism--from their unfitness to be members of the visible church of Christ, which ought to consist of persons called out by grace from their natural estate, and separated from the world--from the impossibility of their inheriting from their parents a fitness for gospel ordinances; shewing, at large, that, the covenant made with Abraham cannot entitle the children of believers, merely as such, to a participation of the privileges of a christian church--and, from the total want of command, example, or just consequence in scripture for baptizing them. This letter is signed H.H., and dated May 10th. 1622. Before it reached those to whom it was addressed, it fell into the hands of a warm advocate of the church of England, who immediately published it, and an answer to it, under the title of "*Anabaptisme's Mystery of Iniquity unmasked*, by I.P. A.D. 1623." [Some have supposed that I.P. was the famous Dr. John Preston. The copy now before us is bound up with another piece against the separatists, avowedly by the same author, entitled, "*Wisdom's Bountie to heavenly Pilgrims, unmasking the doctrines of the Man of Sin*. 1622." This is principally employed in defending the doctrines of personal election. It does not appear how the letter fell into I.P.'s hand. He says that, it was by God's providence that it came to his view. He informs us further, that H.H., in whose name the letter was written, had, by God's providence also, previous to the publication of this answer, revolted from the anabaptists. If so, probably he had handed the letter to I.P. *Anabaptisme's Mystery*, Contents and page 13.] This author says, that the baptists, in those days, wrote many books in defence of their opinions, and were in the habit of producing great numbers of scriptures to prove their doctrines: and that they maintained an appearance of more holiness than the members of the church, whose books and conversation they avoided. He likewise informs us, that besides the denial of infant baptism, they also denied the doctrine of election, reprobation, and final perseverance: and says, that "though their letter question them not, yet the seeds were sown among you, so well by their apostles as books." This Mr. Crosby seems to consider a slander, and says it has ordinarily been their treatment to be accused only upon supposition. But the historian must have strangely forgotten himself, for, scarce eleven years previous to this period, Mr. Helwisse, who as he supposes, was the writer of this letter, had published, in conjunction with his friends, the Confession of Faith already noticed, in which they certainly deny personal election, reprobation, and final perseverance. And I.P. assures us, that their sentiments, both respecting baptism and predestination, gained, in 1623, multitudes of disciples: [*Anabaptisme's Mystery*, p. 61.] or, in other words, that, at that time the general baptists increased rapidly in numbers. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 133-140 and 275.] or, in other words, that, at that time, the general baptists increased rapidly in numbers. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 133-140 and 275.]

It is probable that Mr. Helwisse died about this time; but we have no account of his death. And we are equally uninformed respecting his contemporary and associate, Mr. John

Morton. He was one of Mr. Smyth's disciples; and a fellow-labourer with him in the formation of the church in Holland. Most probably he returned with Mr. Helwisse to London: as we have evidence, that he both wrote and suffered in the cause of believer's baptism. He was a zealous general baptist. In the beginning of the civil wars, a book was found, in demolishing an old wall near Colchester, entitled "Truth's Champion, by J. Morton," which was supposed to be the production of this minister. It contained thirteen chapters in the defence of the principles of the general baptists. As it was written in a very good style, and the arguments managed with dexterity and skill, his party were much pleased with it: and had it printed. It is probable, from this circumstance, that Mr. Morton settled, and raised a church, in this part of the country. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 276-273.]

It is plain, from the books published against the baptists, at this period, that they proceeded with great courage and resolution: and, notwithstanding the severe opposition of the prelacy and the civil power, they increased much in number. Two years after the above attack, two able disputants, Messrs. Dod and Cleaver, united their strength against the baptists, in a publication called "The Patrimony of children," and apologize for engaging in the dispute, by asserting the industry with which the baptists propagated their doctrine, and the many instances in which persons of good note for piety had been drawn away by them. They appear careful not to give publicity to the performances of the baptists; as they invariably, except in one instance, conceal the names of the authors, and the titles of the books, against which they contend. They bear the same testimony to the doctrinal sentiments of the baptists: who, they say, agreed with the Arminians in some opinions; and asserted that all children dying in their infancy shall be saved, through the merits of Christ." [Ibid. Vol. I. p. 241.]

There is some reason to believe that, in A.D. 1626, there was a general baptist church, at Amersham, in Buckinghamshire. In the first page of all old church-book belonging to that church, there is an imperfect entry in this form: "Brother David, 26 of April, 1626:" which affords a strong presumption that there was a church in that town at that early period. And we have Dr. Featley's authority for stating that, two years prior to this, they had many converts in Southwark. [Dipper's Dipt. Ded.] Seven years after this date, in 1633, the first distinct particular baptist church was formed, which was composed of a number of persons who withdrew from the independent church, under Mr. Luthorp; and, uniting in a church state, chose Mr. J. Spilsbury for their pastor. Mr. Crosby's assertion, that "the baptists who had hitherto been intermixed with other protestant dissenters without distinction, began now to separate themselves, and formed distinct societies," can only regard the particular baptists.--They, it does appear, had till now continued to belong to independent churches; and their number could not be great, as the first church consisted of fewer than thirty members. But Mr. Crosby himself has furnished us with sufficient evidence, that the general baptists formed distinct societies, twenty-five years prior to this date: and, that they continued their profession, had regular church officers, and courageously maintained their tenets, during the whole interval. [Crosby, vol. I. p. 146.]

SECT. 5.--Mr. Lamb's Church. Mr. Henry Denne's labours, imprisonments, and disputes.

When governments are intolerant, times of political confusion and insubordination are favourable to the discovery and propagation of truth. Such was the period of the civil wars which distracted England during the latter part of the reign of the unhappy Charles I. While the different parties were struggling for temporal authority, the subjects had an opportunity of following the dictates of their own conscience in religious concerns. Various sects, therefore, arose; and the number of nonconformists rapidly increased. Nor was it surprising, when the unnatural restraints which popery and prelacy had so long imposed on the consciences of men were suddenly removed, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes, if some irregularities and much enthusiastic zeal disfigured the purest churches. That this was the case, the history of every denomination bears ample testimony; and the character of the general baptists, in this period, was not free from these shades.

Previous to the commencement of the civil wars, a baptist church had been formed, under the care of Mr. Thomas Lamb, which usually met in Bell-alley, Colemanstreet. Mr. Lamb joined the baptists, and zealously exerted himself in promoting the spread of their doctrines, when archbishop Laud presided over the affairs of the church. At the instigation of this tyrannical prelate, he was seized at Colchester, his native city, and dragged in chains to London, for dissenting from the national church, and preaching to a separate congregation. He was arraigned before the Star Chamber, and required to confess that he had administered the Lord's supper, the penalty for which was banishment. Mr. Lamb, however, pleading the right of an Englishman, refused to criminate himself, and was remanded to prison. His wife solicited the archbishop to take pity on a mother and eight children, and to release their husband and father: but the unfeeling priest was untouched with her afflictions, and roughly ordered his servants to "take away that troublesome woman." After sometime, he obtained his liberty; and resumed his favourite employment of preaching the gospel. This brought him into new troubles; from which he was no sooner delivered, than he returned to his work. Thus he pursued what he thought the path of duty, till he had been confined in almost every prison in London and its vicinity. He frequently observed, that man was not fit to preach, who would not preach for God's sake, though he was sure to die for it as soon as he had finished. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 54.]

At the beginning of the civil wars, Mr. Lamb's church appears* to have been in a very flourishing condition. The congregation was numerous; and the meeting-house yard was frequently crowded. There were several popular and useful preachers, at that time, in the church, who laboured much in spreading the gospel. Nor did they confine themselves to their own neighbourhood; but preached in various places in the city, and frequently went into distant parts of the kingdom with the same design. The church used to send the ministers forth, by a regular church act, to preach the gospel in dark places. In this manner, they extended their exertions, not only into most of the counties of England, but even into Wales: and it appears from Mr. Edwards' outcry against them, that they made many converts. [Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part I. p. 108.] Besides the regular seasons of public worship, this society, if we believe Mr. Edwards, had stated exercises, in which any member of the church might deliver his opinion on a proposed subject; and any other

member might confirm or oppose the assertions of the former. On these according to the same author, it was no uncommon thing for women publicly to engage in these disputes, and maintain their sentiments in long harangues. It is not improbable that these exercises, though well adapted to promote discussion, were sometimes attended with a degree of confusion; which might give occasion for those exaggerated accounts which the calumniator, to whom we have already referred, has handed down to posterity. But any one who has read the detailed reports of their orderly proceedings in their church-meetings, preserved in their ancient records, will give very little credit to the extravagant misrepresentations of that author.

[* Though several late authors have classed the congregation in Bell-alley among the particular baptist churches, and have asserted that Messrs. Lamb and Denne were strict Calvinists, yet we, without hesitation, rank them among the general baptists. Mr. Edwards, who was their contemporary and had good opportunities of knowing their sentiments, constantly represented them as zealous assertors of the universal love of God to man. The reports of this calumniator ought, it is readily allowed, to be received with caution; but when he so repeatedly and circumstantially states a fact of which he could not be ignorant, and which, had it been false, thousands of his readers could have contradicted, he surely deserves some credit. His testimony, however, is supported by less exceptionable witnesses. Luke Howard of Dover, who, in 1672, published a "Looking Glass for the Baptists," tells us that, in 1644, there was a great contest between the general and particular baptists in Kent:--that Lamb and Barber were the leaders of the general baptists, and held the universal love of God to all; and, that Kiffin, Pa----- &c. were the principal men among the particular, and held particular election, &c. This author had, at first, been a disciple of Mr. Kiffin; he afterwards joined Mr. Lamb's church, and at length became a quaker: he must, therefore, be acquainted with their sentiments. With respect to Mr. H. Denne, we have the authority of his friends and disciples for ranking him among the general baptists. The G. B. church at Warboys was, as we shall soon see, gathered by him: and, in the original records of the society now before us, at the year 1644, Henry Denne is asserted to have "manifested, both by his preaching and writing, the great love of God the Father, in sending his only Son, the Lord Jesus, to die for every man."--It might be added, that the churches planted by the ministry of Mr. Lamb and his associates in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, &c. &c. were, as will abundantly appear in the progress of this history, all general baptist churches.--On the whole, Mr. Crosby, who appears to have read the works of these active ministers, probably formed a correct estimate of their sentiments, when he states that Mr. Lamb "laboured to reconcile particular election with universal redemption"; and that "Mr. Denne took the middle way, being properly neither Calvinist nor Arminian." The truth is, though they firmly believed and zealously promulgated, that glorious truth, that Christ died for all; and that salvation through his blood was to be offered to all, yet they could not divest themselves of their former principles, but mixed some confused notions of a particular election with their more liberal sentiments. Their followers, however, soon became consistent.--Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part I. pp. 124, 126, 81.--Howards *Looking Glass for Baptists*, pp. 1,2.--Crosby, Vol. III. p. 56.--Vol. I. p. 305.--W.C.B. 1644.]

The most noted of Mr. Lamb's assistants was Mr. Henry Denne. He was educated at Cambridge, and left the university, in 1630. Entering into orders, he obtained the living of Pyrton, in Hertfordshire; where he laboured, for about ten years, with great acceptance. In 1643, he professed himself a baptist, was baptized by immersion in London, and joined the church in Bell-alley. He was a man of decision and zeal: and entered warmly into the views of that society. He was much employed in travelling 102 from place to place, to preach the gospel, and very successful in his endeavours. His mode of preaching was persuasive and affectionate; even his enemies being judges. Mr. Disborough, a person of influence and authority, appears to have patronized him; and declared, says Mr. Edwards, that "Mr. Denne was the ablest man in England for prayer, expounding, and preaching."

In one of his ministerial excursions, by the authority of the church, in 1644, Mr. Denne went into Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and the neighbouring counties, "to preach," says Mr. Edwards, "universal grace, and to rebaptize: and, according to his commission, he did much mischief in those parts:" [Ibid, Part I. p. 108.] that is, he was very successful in his endeavours to convince and enlighten his benighted countrymen. His labours were, however, soon interrupted by the committee for Cambridge,* by whose order he was apprehended, and sent to prison. Mr. Denne appealed to parliament, and was, by an order from the house, brought up to London, and committed to custody in Peter-house, Bishops-gate-street.

[* In 1641, a committee of the House of Commons was appointed, to send ministers where there were vacancies, &c. which had sub-committees in the various counties. They sometimes took security of the preachers whom they patronized. Mr. Denne was under a bond of two hundred pounds, to appear before them whenever required, at twenty-four hours notice.--Neal, Vol. I. p. 727. Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part III. p. 86.] In the same prison was confined that noted opponent of the baptists, Dr. Featley, who had just published his fatuous work, which he triumphantly entitled "The Dippers dipt: or the Anabaptists plunged over head and ears," &c. When Mr. Denne entered the prison, this pamphlet was put into his hands; and he, feeling himself called upon to defend the principles for which he suffered, sent the Dr. a message; offering to dispute with him on the arguments advanced in his book. The Dr. accepted the challenge with alacrity: but, when they had only debated the first of his ten arguments, not much liking his opponent, he declined proceeding; under pretence that it was not safe, without the permission of the magistrates. He desired Mr. Denne to write, and he would defend his own arguments. Mr. Denne accordingly drew up an elaborate answer to the "Dippers dipt;" and, in little more than a month, presented it to the author: dating it, in prison, Feb. 22d. 1645. It does not appear, that Dr. Featley, though he had so boldly promised to defend himself, thought proper to make any reply.

After some time, Mr. Denne obtained his liberty, by the interest of his admirer, Mr. Disborough; and went down to Elsly, in Cambridgeshire, where he preached in the parish church; and, though an avowed baptist, enjoyed for a season the emoluments of the benefice: such was the confusion of the times. Here his ministry was greatly followed; and he laboured much to spread the gospel, especially by encouraging and employing lay preachers. He was much opposed, by both prelatists and presbyterians; but firmly

maintained his ground. Being once forbidden to deliver a lecture in the church at St. Ives, going into an adjoining church-yard, he preached, under a tree, to a numerous company; and, if we credit Mr. Edwards, shook off the dust of his feet against St. Ives, pronouncing many fearful woes against its inhabitants for not receiving the gospel. [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 303--Edwards, ubi supra.]

SECT. 6.--General Baptist Churches gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, Spalding and in Kent.

It was probably during Mr. Denne's excursion, which ended in the imprisonment already mentioned, that the general baptist church at Warboys, in Huntingdonshire, was formed. Mr. Denne had, previous to the year 1644, been instrumental in gathering a church at Fenstanton, in the same county, which appears to have been, at this time, numerous and flourishing. The date of its rise does not appear; but we have a manuscript volume of its Records, commencing in 1651. The church at Fenstanton may be considered as the mother church, in these parts, from which the general baptist cause spread itself into several adjacent counties. The original Records of the church at Warboys have also been preserved, and are now before us. They contain an account of the manner in which this church was gathered; which, as it is curious in itself, and may give an idea of the mode in which such societies were most usually formed, the reader will, it is presumed, be pleased to see in their own words.

"1644.--Mystery Babylon, the great whore spoken of by the blessed apostle John, in the Revelations, with whom the inhabitants of the earth have committed fornication, had so deceived the nations of the world, that, although something had been done in this nation by way of reformation; yet so great was the darkness, that few knew in what manner churches ought to be gathered and governed, according to the scriptures and practice of the holy apostles, in their time. It pleased God, about this time, to stir up some in this town to search the scriptures: and, by the Lord's providence, one Henry Denne, an able and learned teacher, did, by preaching and writing, manifest the great love of God the Father to mankind in giving his only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for every man: and further declaring, that whosoever did believe in him and repent of their sins, ought to be dipt in water, (which is baptism;) and from thenceforth to walk in holy obedience to the scriptures: declaring such to be the church of God. By the preaching of the said Henry Denne, many in this county received the faith, of whom some were of this town: who considering that, lest Eusebius Hunt, the parish teacher of Warboys, should be offended at it, thought good to acquaint him with it: and, finding an opportunity when he had sprinkled an infant, one William Dunn, told him, he had no ground for so doing in the scriptures; but it was a tradition of man: desiring him to take it into consideration, and leave it off. Eusebius Hunt said he would dispute it. Whereupon, Henry Dunne being sent for, came to Warboys, accompanied with sundry of the brethren: and Henry Denne preached in the public meeting-place; who confirmed them much in the truth of, the gospel. Afterwards Henry Denne was desired to come again: when, after a long dispute with Eusebius Hunt, Henry Denne demanded, whether he judged it best to sprinkle infants, or let them alone: Eusebius Hunt answered, "To let them alone." Henry Denne said, surely we are to do the best way. William Dunn with the rest being resolved to join

with Henry Denne, acquainted him of their mind: who exhorted them not to delay the time of their baptism. Not long after, these by name were baptized: William Dunn, John Richards, John Ward, John Kidson, and William Askew "

"1647.--They continued in the apostles' doctrine, and breaking of bread, and prayer; assembling often with the church at Fenstanton; but by reason of the great opposition they had in going to Fenstanton, by the rude people of Fenstanton and St. Ives, William Dunn said "Let us have their advice at Fenstanton, about some to carry on the work of the gospel, and administer the ordinances among us. Whereupon, advising with John Matthews, a leader in the church at Fenstanton, he answered after this manner."Seeing that three of you use to teach the word, my advice is, that you cast lots for one overseer, and one deacon;" which being agreed upon, they five aforesaid, together with William Bass, and John Palmer of Bidley, cast lots. The lot fell on William Dunn for an overseer, and John Richards, for a deacon: the rest were content therewith." [W.C.B. 1644 and 1647.]

In the year 1646, Mr. Denne was invited to preach the gospel, and administer the ordinances, at Spalding, in Lincolnshire, by one John Makernes, who appears to have been a respectable inhabitant of that town. Mr. Denne arrived at Spalding, on the Monday, and preached several times at the house of his inviter, and at a Mr. Fuston's. It seems there were several candidates waiting for an opportunity of being baptized; but they feared to administer the ordinance in a public manner. They therefore determined to avail themselves of the shades of the evening; and, on Wednesday, near midnight, Mr. Denne baptized four persons, in a place called the Little Groft. The persons baptized were, Anne Stennett and Anne Smith, both servants to Mr. Makernes, Godfrey Roote, and John Sowter.--The female candidates had, very prudently, invited a young woman to accompany and assist them. Their companion, by some means, divulged the transaction, and the report soon reached the ears of the magistrates. They sent officers to arrest Mr. Denne on the Lord's-day morning; and kept him in close custody the whole day, to prevent him from preaching.

Mr. Denne was strictly examined, and confessed that he had preached; but declined accusing himself of baptizing. The next day, June 22d. the young woman, who had been present, was examined on oath; and confirmed the fact. The magistrates threatened to commit him to Lincoln gaol: to which he replied that he cared not for himself; but was concerned that his great work should be interrupted. Crosby says he was committed; but the result of this examination is not stated by Mr. Edwards. It is plain, that there were many baptists at this time, about Spalding, as the magistrate who apprehended this minister informed our author, that several had been brought before him. [Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part III. p. 86. Crosby, Vol. I. p. 222.] ---- themselves to extend the cause of truth in these parts, others were equally active in distant counties. In Kent, and its vicinity, the general baptists appear to have gained considerable ground, before the commencement of the civil wars. Here, Mr. William Jeffery, and his brother David, were the principal instruments of spreading and supporting their doctrines, if not of introducing them. They probably had been convinced under the ministry of Mr. Lamb, or some, of the itinerants connected with him. They were, sons of pious parents, of the parish of

Penshurst. Mr. W. Jeffery, was born in 1616; and, after, he arrived at manhood, settled at Bradburn, near Seven Oaks, in Kent. At this place, he gathered a church, over which he was ordained pastor, which was for some time called the church of Bradburn, but afterwards took its name from Bessell's Green. This, society flourished much under his care; but it did not engross all his attention.

He raised a church about Speldhurst and Pembury, which he settled in gospel order, under the superintendence, of Mr. John Care, whom he ordained to the pastoral office. This church has since assembled at Tunbridge-wells. In short, by the assiduous labours of this active man, assisted by his brother, more than twenty churches were gathered, in the county of Kent, which all existed in 1738, when Mr. Crosby wrote: and some of them, at that time, had large congregations. Several of them remain to the present day; but, it is painful to be, obliged to add, that most of them are in a very low state.

Mr. Jeffery was eminent for maintaining the great truth that Christ died for all; and has left an elaborate defence of it, in a publication, entitled " The Whole Faith of Man." He laboured earnestly to establish the churches in the foundation principles of the gospel, which he and most of the general baptists for many years after him, built on Heb. 6:1, 2. He was a zealous assertor of the distinguishing truths of christianity; as fully appears in the work just mentioned. It cannot be ascertained when he commenced baptist; but, in the title-page of the second edition of his book, which was published in 1659, he says he has been for years a poor laborour in Christ's vineyard: and he was an eminent defender of the baptist cause in 1644. It is therefore probable that he embraced that opinion, and was engaged in propagating it, several years prior to the civil wars. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 97. Vol. I. p. 344, compared with Vol. III. p. 9.--Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*.]

Mr. Jeffery was made the instrument of convincing many eminent members of the established church of the divine institution of believers' baptism. We shall mention an instance. Mr. Francis Cornwell, M.A. was educated at Cambridge, and preferred to the living of Marden, in Kent. Here he probably, became acquainted with the general baptists, and began to be dissatisfied with some of the ceremonies of the church. He refused to conform, and was confined, with another minister, in Maidstone jail. Among others that came to visit him, was a woman, who had some doubts respecting infant baptism. She applied to Mr. Cornwell for a solution of her scruples: and he endeavoured, by the best scripture arguments he could recollect, to give her satisfaction; but could neither satisfy her nor himself. This caused him to examine the subject; and the result was, his full conviction that infant baptism was unscriptural. He obtained his liberty some time after, and returned to Marden, where he cultivated an acquaintance with Mr. Jeffery and was privately baptized by him. As he had not yet openly declared his sentiments, he was chosen to preach a visitation sermon, in 1644, at Cranbrook, in Kent. This was thought a proper opportunity of making a public confession of the truth.--Accordingly he read as a text, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." [Mark 8:7.] In pursuing his discourse, he declared that infant baptism was an antichristian innovation, an human invention; unsupported by any precept, example, or just inference in the word of God. This startled the ministers who heard him: and when he came down, they offered to dispute the subject with him: but he referred them to Mr.

Jeffery, who was present. They found Mr. Jeffery better prepared for the defence of Mr. Cornwell's assertions than they were for the attack. Mr. Christopher Blackwood, therefore, one of the ministers, desired them to suspend the debate till the next meeting, when, as he had taken the sermon in short hand, he would return an answer which he trusted would be satisfactory. Mr. Blackwood studied the subject closely, but was overcome by the force of evidence. At the time proposed, he brought, not a refutation of Mr. Cornwell's sentiments, but a confirmation of them; in a series of papers, which he afterwards published under the title of "The Storming of Antichrist." These gentlemen afterwards became eminent among the particular baptists. [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 344, Vol. III. p. 7, &c.]

SECT. 7.--The Spirit of Persecution predominates, and the Baptists feel its effects.

To those who have not been accustomed to contemplate the inconsistency of the human character, it may appear strange, that, men who had liberal ideas of civil liberty, and were actually in arms against their king, in defence of it, should have very contracted views respecting the liberty of conscience, and labour to destroy it: yet such was the fact. The presbyterians, who, in the beginning of the civil wars, obtained great influence in the state, while they pulled down the established religion, and, involved prelacy in the fate of royalty, discovered little inclination to countenance, or even to tolerate, the other sects of non-conformists. Their ministers laboured assiduously, both in their writings and preaching, to represent the granting of liberty to every man to judge and act for himself in matters of religion, as the height of madness and impiety;--a plan originating in the infernal regions, and employed by the enemy of all good to overthrow christianity, and ruin both church and state. Edwards, the great champion of the party, after exhorting the civil magistrates to proclaim public fasts against heresies--to call upon all the people to subscribe the national creed--and to burn the books in favour of heresy and toleration, by the hand of the common hangman, for a sweet smelling sacrifice to God--roundly asserts, that, "the government should keep the people in such awe, by authority and penal statutes, as that they should not dare but stand to the covenant:" or, in other words, conform to the religion of the state: and cordially recommends to the rulers of this country the example of the 112 senate of Zurich, which decreed, that, when an anabaptist had been dealt with by ten several disputations, and still continued to rebaptize, he should be drowned. [Gangraena, Part I. pp. 200-204.] Calamy, Burgess, Baxter, Marshall, and other eminent divines, at this period, advanced similar doctrines, though generally in more guarded terms. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 176-184.]

It is pleasing, in such times as these, to discover any traces of a true christian spirit. We read, therefore, with peculiar satisfaction, Mr. Edwards' account of meetings in London, about 1643, in which seekers, anabaptists, antinomians, Brownists, and independents, united in endeavouring to procure full liberty of conscience for all the professors of religion of every denomination, including even the Jews. Some presbyterians, who attended on these occasions, through a desire to understand more clearly the object of their meeting, ere the only persons who opposed a general toleration. [Gangraena, Part I. p. 14.] Some of the nonconformists, who were now under the yoke, shewed too plainly, by their conduct, when they gained the ascendancy, that their circumstances had too

much effect on their present professions; but the general baptists have always been the steady advocates of the rights of conscience.

The persons who had seized the civil government acted on the same principles with the presbyterian divines, though with less precipitation. The ministers made heavy complaints against their want of decision in the good cause, and were very earnest, in their public prayers, for an increase of their zeal. The first step taken by the parliament, was an ordinance which passed, April 26th. 1645, in these words: "It is this day ordained and declared, by the Lords and Commons in parliament assembled, that no person be admitted to preach, who is not ordained a minister, either in this or some other reformed church: except such, as intending the ministry, shall be allowed, for the trial of their gifts, by those who shall be appointed thereunto by both houses of parliament." [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 93.]

This has generally been the first step against the liberty of conscience, and the prelude to the fiercest persecutions. Under a pretence of securing respectability to the ministry, and of preventing improper persons from intruding into the sacred office, a right of licensing persons to preach the gospel has been assumed by some powerful sect. Whenever this occurs, religious liberty is so far extinct; and that sect usurps the authority of the great Head of the church, whose prerogative alone it is to send forth labourers into his vineyard. The predominant party cannot be expected to sanction any preachers but such as propagate its peculiar tenets: and all others must either retire; or, by venturing to follow the dictates of their conscience, expose themselves to the penalties denounced against transgressors.

Thus it operated at this time. Mr. Lamb, the pastor of the church in Bell-alley, had never been ordained, according to the intent of this ordinance. He was, originally, a soap-boiler; and had probably been called, by the church of which he was a member, to exercise amongst them; and, after suffering much for the truth, had been regularly set apart to the pastoral office, by the church which he then served. This however, was not recognized by the legislature as a church: and, therefore, he was required, in conformity to the ordinance, to lay aside preaching. But it was not to be expected, that he, who had braved the haughty Laud, would silently submit. He continued his labours, without noticing this new law. Information against him was laid before the Lord Mayor, who sent the peace officers to arrest the lay-preacher, and his assistants: for, as we have before seen, that church had several preachers. The officers went, in the time of public worship, to Bell-alley, and attempted to seize Mr. Lamb, and a young man, who had, for a few months, preached amongst them. The congregation, incensed at the interruption, called the officers persecutors: but Mr. Lamb appeased the rising tumult. He treated the officers with great civility, requested permission to conclude the service, and engaged that he and the young man would attend the Lord Mayor at six o'clock in the evening, to answer any charge that might be brought against them. Such was the confidence which these officers reposed in them, that they took their words, and returned; and, at the time appointed, Mr. Lamb and his companion waited on his lordship.

That magistrate first interrogated the youth, and asked him why he preached, and what warrant he had?--he replied, that God had opened his mouth, and he must shew forth his praise. Mr. Lord observed, that he might shew forth the praise of God in the discharge of his calling, as a private christian: and enquired how long he had been a preacher. He answered, ever since he was baptized. His lordship, whose thoughts, it seems, ran wholly on infant baptism, exclaimed, "Hath your mouth been opened ever since your infancy?"--'My infant baptism,' rejoined the youth, 'was no baptism: I have not been baptized more than six months.' His lordship then, turning to Mr. Lamb, said, "You have transgressed an ordinance of parliament." 'No,' replied the intrepid minister, 'I am a preacher, called and chosen by a reformed church as any is in the world.' The Lord Mayor held them to bail, to appear before a committee of parliament, which sent them to prison. They were, after a time, released through the intercession of some powerful friends: when they resumed their labours with renewed zeal: and preached more openly and frequently than before this interruption. [Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part I. p. 126.]

It was probably about this time, that a circumstance happened, which deserves recording. Mr. Lamb had made known his intention of baptizing a woman, in Old Ford river, a place then much used for this purpose. Her husband, an inveterate enemy to the baptists, carried a large stone under his coat, with a determination, its he afterwards confessed, to throw it at Mr. Lamb, as he stood in the water. But the prayer which this minister offered before the administration of the ordinance, so affected this opposer of the truth, that he dropped the stone, and melted into tears: and was himself the next person who was baptized. [Crosby. Vol. III. p. 55.]

The prosperity of the baptists alarmed the paedobaptists, and they used every method to misrepresent their doctrines and practices.--Amongst other expedients, they frequently took occasion, both from the pulpit and the press, to describe the baptists as murderers: pretending, in direct opposition to the experience of thousands in every age, and to the testimony of the ablest physicians, that immersion in water was prejudicial to health, and even destructive to life itself. Such a charge from an Edwards or a Featley excites no surprise: we know the men and their communications. But, we blush for the weakness of our nature, when we hear the learned and pious Baxter assert, that baptism by immersion is "good for nothing, but to dispatch men out of the world who are burdensome, in it, and to ranken church-yards:" and that "the abettors of it are no more to be suffered than highway murderers." [Baxter's *Plain Scripture Proofs*, pp. 135, 136.] Weak as this charge is, it appears, at this time, to have been urged with considerable effect: a remarkable instance of which we have in the treatment of Mr. Samuel Oates, one of Mr. Lamb's associates and fellow-labourers.

This young man, Mr. Edwards informs us, was a weaver by trade. This may be true; but it is certain that he possessed good natural abilities, was a popular and acceptable preacher, and an able disputant. Under the sanction of the church in Bell-alley he had itinerated, in the year 1645, with great success, in the counties of Sussex and Surry. In the beginning of the following year, he spent several months in the same employment, in different parts of Essex. His labours were abundantly blest, and he baptized numbers on a profession of faith. This roused the enmity of his opponents, who appear to have been exceedingly mad

against him. They sought for an occasion to blast his character: and, at length, flattered I themselves that they had found one. Among the multitudes that were baptized by Mr. Oates, was a young woman, named Anne Martin, who died in a few weeks after her baptism. His enemies laid hold of this circumstance to irritate the populace against him, as the cause of her death. An inquest was held on the body; but so eager were the magistrates to secure him, that they committed him to Colchester jail before the coroner's jury had returned their verdict. His friends, however, did not forsake him; but flocked in crowds to comfort him, during his confinement. Such was their esteem for him, that numbers of respectable persons took a journey from the metropolis, to see him. It vexed the envious Edwards most sensibly to hear, that "there was a great and mighty resort to him in prison: and that many came down from London in coaches to visit him." But this was too great an indulgence to be long allowed and orders were soon procured to admit none to the prisoner.

At length the day of trial arrived, and Mr. Oates was indicted for murder, at the assizes at Chelmsford. But, to the confusion of his accusers, it was proved, by unexceptionable witnesses, amongst whom was the young woman's mother, that for several days after her baptism, the deceased had enjoyed an unusually good state of health, and had walked abroad with comfort. The jury pronounced a verdict of not guilty, and he resumed his labours the ensuing Lord's-day. His enemies, thus disappointed in their attempts upon his life, still continued their ill offices. They incensed the populace against him to such a degree, that some strangers arriving at Wethersfield, and being mistaken for Mr. Oates and his friends, the mob seized them, and, says Mr. Edwards, "pumped them soundly." And, some weeks after, Mr. Oates himself going to Dunmow, they dragged him out of the house, and threw him into the river: thus, adds the same author, with evident satisfaction, "thoroughly dipping him." [Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part II. p. 105.--Crosby, Vol. I. p. 208.]

SECT. 8.--General Baptists at Coventry and in London.--The Parliament enacts severe laws.

In the, very beginning of the civil wars, if not before that period, a general baptist society existed at Coventry. Though the members were a "poor despised people," we have an account of their diligence and zeal left us, by one of their number, which ought to be recorded, in order to provoke others. "Upon the weekly day of public worship," says he, "I was accustomed, with several others, to rise early in the morning, and meet together to pray and confer about the things of God, in order to help each other forward in our christian race. Thus we did, till church worship began. The same improvement of our time we made in the interval after dinner, till the beginning of the afternoon worship; and, at the end thereof, we repeated the same exercise, and continued it until seven or eight o'clock. Oh!" adds the venerable narrator who wrote this account sixty years afterwards, "Oh! that, before I die I might see the fruit of such zeal, liveliness, and thorough godliness in professors, such as I know to have been in those chosen out of the world, and who closed with precious Jesus, at that time!" [J. Davis's *Last Legacy*, pp. 11, 12.]

The general baptist cause gained ground about this period also in London. Mr. John Griffith, about 1640, began to preach and collect a church, over which, in 1646, he was ordained pastor. It afterwards assembled in Dunning's-alley, Bishopsgate-street. Another general baptist church was gathered by the worthy Mr. John Gosnold, which met, for upwards of one hundred and twenty years, in Paul's-alley, Barbican, in a building which, it is said, was erected for a play-house, but was let to them because the government refused to license it. [Wilson's *Hist. and Antiq. of Diss. Churches*, Vol. II. p. 176.--Vol. III. p. 228.] These churches, as we shall see in the sequel, afterwards became numerous and respectable, under the pastoral care of their founders.

There was, also, another society of the same persuasion in London, which probably was gathered before either of the former. It was held at the Spital, Bishopsgate-street, under the superintendence of Mr. Edward Barber. In 1641, this minister was imprisoned eleven months, for publishing a book, in which he asserted that "our Lord Christ appointed dipping, and that the sprinkling of children is not according to Christ's institution." He afterwards laboured zealously, in conjunction with Messrs. Lamb and Denne, in spreading the gospel in country places, especially in Kent: and was esteemed leader among the general baptists.--Crosby says, his congregation was small; but Edwards assures us that he had many in fellowship with him. He tells us that, on Nov. 12th. 1645, about eighty anabaptists met, at a house in Bishopsgate-street; "many of them," says he, belonging to the church of one Barber," when five new members were received. From his manner of telling the story, it is more than probable, that this was a meeting of Mr. Barber's church, to receive new members by the imposition of hands, and to celebrate the Lord's supper. His church must, therefore, at this time, be numerous and prosperous. Mr. D'Anvers states, on the authority of an eye and ear witness, that this was the first church that practised laying on of hands on baptized believers: and that it was introduced about the year 1646, among them, by Mr. Cornwell. [Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 151 and 219.--Looking Glass for Baptists, pp. 1, 2.*Gangraena*, Part I. p. 45.--D'Anvers' *Laying on of hands*, p. 58.]

In the close of this year, the parliament, finding their former ordinance against unordained preachers, by various pleas and evasions, rendered ineffectual, published a Declaration, dated Dec. 26th. 1646, of a more decided nature. It excludes unordained preachers, not only from churches and chapels, but from preaching and expounding in any public place: and it prohibits them, and all other persons, from speaking or writing any thing "against, or in derogation of the church government which is now established by authority of both houses of parliament:" and authorizes and enjoins, not only the civil magistrates, but officers of the army, "to prevent offences of this kind, and to apprehend the offenders, and to give notice hereof to this house, that thereupon course maybe speedily taken for a due punishment to be inflicted on them." [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 94.] This was certainly a strong measure, and shewed too plainly the real disposition of the presbyterians, whose discipline was now established by law. But the circumstances of the times, in a great measure, restrained its operation. There were numbers of nonconformists, or, as they were then called, sectaries, in the army, and in every part of the kingdom, who boldly asserted their right to think and act for themselves in matters of

religion: and the civil powers did not judge it either practicable or prudent, in the unsettled state in which the government then stood, to push matters to extremity.

The baptists, both general and particular, were now very numerous; and several of them persons of influence and property. Many were in the army, both in the ranks and among the officers. Their tenets and their practices, therefore, became better known; and their importance, as members of society, was more justly appreciated. It was, probably, these, and similar causes that induced the parliament, in less than three months from the date of the last declaration, to publish another, that discovered more of a christian spirit. It was dated March 4th. 1647, and, after adverting to the never-to-be-forgotten Munster anabaptists, proceeds thus: " But for their opinion against the baptism of infants, it is only a difference about a circumstance of time in the administration of an ordinance, wherein,, in former ages as well as this, learned men have differed both in opinion and practice. And though we could wish that all men would satisfy themselves, and join with us in our judgment and practice in this point; yet herein we hold it fit that men should be convinced by the word of God, with great gentleness and reason, and not beaten out of it with force and violence." [Crosby, Vol. I. p. 196.]

From such a declaration as this, it might have been conjectured that the parliament began to entertain more liberal views of the rights of conscience; but the events of a few months tended to prove the fallacy of such conjectures. The ruling party were the avowed enemies of toleration in religious concerns: and though the embarrassments of their situation, the fear of displeasing many of the soldiers, and the growing influence of Cromwell, checked their progress; yet they persevered, with a steady zeal, in their endeavours to promote their favourite scheme of uniformity. On May 2nd. 1548, they passed an Ordinance for punishing blasphemies and heresies. In this they declare, first, that whosoever shall, by preaching, writing, or printing, maintain opinions contrary to theirs, on a long list of obscure subjects, shall be adjudged felons without the benefit of clergy: and, secondly, that every one who maintains any tenet included in a second list of heresies, shall be required to renounce his errors in the public congregation; and, in case of refusal, shall find bail not to maintain his errors any more. In this latter catalogue of heterodox doctrines, is the asserting, "that the baptizing of infants is unlawful, or such baptism is void; and that persons ought to be baptized again, and in pursuance thereof baptizing any person formerly baptized." [Ibid. pp. 199-205.]

This terrible Ordinance, which exceeded in severity most of the laws of the papists, and proscribed, at once, all the inhabitant's of England, except the rigid presbyterians, discovered too plainly the spirit of that party. Had their designs succeeded, and their government obtained a permanent settlement, it is evident, that persecution, in all its horrors, would have been the portion of every one who should have dared to differ, though ever so respectfully, from the creed established by law. It is, however, the part of justice to remark, that the presbyterians, of the present age, entirely disavow the arbitrary principles of their predecessors: and heartily join in those liberal sentiments respecting the right of private judgment, which distinguish modern professors of almost every persuasion.

SECT. 9. --Religious liberty enjoyed in a great degree during the Interregnum.

The affairs of the unhappy and misguided Charles I. were now fast approaching to a crisis. After enduring a long captivity, and being dragged about from place to place, at the discretion of his former subjects, he was, at length, beheaded, Jan. 30th. 1649. As this event had been hastened by the officers of the army, they began to assume more importance: and, relying on the support of their troops, claimed a share in the management of public affairs. Oliver Cromwell was now at the head of the army, and directed all its motions, though he had only the title of lieutenant general. This great man, for such he certainly was, had much more correct sentiments respecting religious liberty than many of his contemporaries. In a correspondence, A.D. 1650, with the ministers of Edinburgh, who, being rigid presbyterians, and strenuous advocates for the dignity of the ministerial office, reproached him with opening the pulpit doors to all intruders, by means of which a flood of errors had broken in upon the nation, Cromwell writes thus: "We look upon the ministers as helpers, not as lords over God's people.-Where do you find in scripture that preaching is included in your function? Though an approbation from men has order in it; yet he that hath no better has none at all.--I hope that he that ascended on high may give his gifts to whom he pleases: and if those gifts be the seal of mission, are you not envious though Eldad and Medad prophesy? You know who has bid us earnestly desire the best gifts; but chiefly that we may prophesy; which the apostle explains to be speaking to instruction, edification, and comfort; of which the instructed, edified, and comforted can best tell the energy and effect. Now if this be evidence, take heed lest you envy for your own sakes; lest you be guilty of a greater fault than Moses reproved in Joshua, when he envied for his sake. Indeed, you err through mistake of the scriptures. Approbation is an act of convenience with respect to order; not of necessity to give faculty to preach the gospel. Your pretended fear lest error should step in, is like the man, who would keep all the wine out of the country, lest any should be drunk. It will be found an unwise and unjust jealousy to deny any man the liberty he hath by nature, under the supposition he may abuse it. When he doth abuse it then judge." [Neal, Vol. III. p. 24.]

These rational sentiments of their leader were shared by the majority of the army, in which, as we have already observed, were many independents and baptists. Their influence acted as a check on the proceedings of the parliament. When the army was in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, the votes and ordinances of the commons breathed an air moderation and liberality; but no sooner were the forces removed than the spirit of party began to prevail, and every exertion was made to enforce a strict uniformity to the established faith. The genius of Cromwell, however, at length gained a decided ascendancy; and liberty of conscience was the happy result.

Soon after the death of the king, Cromwell, who was sent, as lord lieutenant, to reduce Ireland, which had declared for young Charles, addressed letters to the parliament, previous to his departure, recommending the removal of all penal laws relative to religion: and, in consequence, the house appointed a committee to make a report concerning a method for the ease of tender consciences. This was seconded by a petition from general Fairfax and his council of officers, presented Aug. 16th. 1649, praying that

"all penal statutes formerly made, and ordinances lately made, whereby many conscientious people were molested, and the propagation of the gospel hindered, might be removed." The house received it favourably, and promised to take the subject into speedy consideration.

An ordinance was, accordingly passed, September 20th. 1650: by which it was enacted and ordained. "That all clauses, articles, and provisions, in any act or ordinance of parliament, whereby any penalty or punishment is imposed, or meant to be imposed, on any person whatsoever, for not repairing to their respective parish churches; or for not keeping holy-days, or for not hearing common prayer, &c. shall be, and hereby is, wholly repealed and made void." In order, however, to guard against the abuse of this liberty, by the licentious and profane, the law goes on to ordain "that all persons not having a reasonable excuse shall, on every Lord's day, and day of public thanksgiving or humiliation, resort to some place of public worship; or be present at some other place in the practice of religious duty, either of prayer or preaching, reading or expounding, the scriptures." [Neal, Vol. 3. p. 28.] This, was a large advance towards relieving tender consciences; but as it only repealed acts made for the security of the church of England, it left some of the most obnoxious ordinances of the present parliament in full force. The confusions of the times appear, however, to have almost totally suspended their operation.

In 1653, the disputes between the parliament and the army were very violent: till Cromwell, on April 20th. dissolved the parliament by force; and, turning the members out of the house, assumed the reins of government. Dec. 16th. he was installed, with great magnificence, as the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England. In the Instrument of Government, drawn up by him and his officers, it was declared, "That none should be compelled to conform to the public religion, or otherwise; but that endeavours should be used to win them, by sound doctrine, and the example of a good conversation that such as profess faith in God by Christ Jesus, though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth, should not be restrained from, but protected in the profession of their faith, and exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others, and to the actual disturbance of the public peace--and that all laws, statutes, and ordinances to the contrary shall be esteemed null and void." [Neal, Vol. III. p. 73.]

Thus persecution was restrained: and the interval from the death of Charles I. to the restoration of his son, may be considered as a season of religious liberty. We turn now to enquire what improvement the general baptists made of this inestimable blessing.

SECT. 10.--The progress of the General Baptists in Lincolnshire, during the protectorate.

About the year 1644, there had arisen, during the civil wars, a church in the South Marsh of Lincolnshire, probably of the independent persuasion. The members of this church suffered much from calumny and persecution. They, at first, sprinkled infants; but admitted no sponsors, and rejected the use of the cross and other ceremonies. They were

a zealous and pious people: earnestly engaged in searching out the will of God, and sincerely desirous of practising what they judged he commanded. It was not to be expected that perfect uniformity would subsist, in the views of a number of persons, equally engaged in this important inquiry; and all claiming a right to determine for themselves. Many differences arose amongst them; and the result was, that they divided into distinct societies. In 1651, four of the members united to form a new interest, on the principle of baptizing by immersion on profession of faith. These four appear to have had the honour of laying the foundation of the general baptist cause in that part of the county. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 77.]

The principal instrument, used by the great Head of the church, for reviving the truth in these parts, was the celebrated **Thomas Grantham**. He probably, though then only seventeen years of age, was one of the four just mentioned. He soon began to be active and useful among them, and became the chief support of the infant cause. As he will bear an important part in the transactions of the general baptists for the ensuing forty years, it may be proper to give a short account of him.

He was born in the year 1634, in the village of Halton, near Spilsbury, in the east of Lincolnshire; and the house in which he first saw the light is still shewn as an object of curiosity and veneration. Tradition reports, that he was brought up in the occupation of a tailor: though we shall find that he afterwards was a respectable farmer. [*Theol. Mag.* Vol. III. p. 2.] We have no account of his parents; but it is probable that his family held a respectable rank in society, and was of longstanding in that county. In the dedication of his principal work, he styles them "The ancient family of the Granthams, in the county of Lincoln." [*Christianismus primitivus*.]

He was, early in life, brought to a sense of the importance of religion. He himself states, that the Lord wrought faith and repentance in his soul, in the fourteenth or fifteenth year of his life; and that as soon as he found a people congregated upon the foundation principles of Christ's doctrine, Heb. 6:1, 2. he joined himself to them. This was at Boston, in the same county, where he was baptized, in 1653, when only nineteen years of age. [*Dispute with Connould*, p. 5.] As this was no more than two years after the four persons already mentioned had left the independents, it is probable that this church at Boston had existed previous to that period. Mr. Grantham, however, continued his connection with those few friends: and was very helpful to them in procuring ministers to preach for them; whose labours were highly blest to their establishment in the faith, and to the increase of their numbers.

But it was not long before his associates discovered, that he had abilities to serve them in his own person. He was, therefore, encouraged to exercise his gifts amongst them: and in a short time, was called to the work of the ministry. He has left a very ingenuous description of his feelings on this occasion, which was written within six months of his death. "When first it pleased God to concern my thoughts about preaching the word," he says, in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Connould, dated June 11th, 1691, "I do assure you, in all faithfulness, nothing seemed more terrible to me. The greatness of the work, and my poor and low capacity, and great unfitness for so sacred a work, did cause me to strive much

against many pressures in my spirit, which yet I hope were from the Lord. I remained silent under a heavy burthen, with much begging of God that I might be excused; but if not, that it would then please him to fit me for, and bless me, in, the work. And he was stronger than I, and prevailed. Then I opened my mouth with great trembling and fear: (the Lord knows it.) I had rather have been sent to any drudgery in the world, than to preach. Howbeit, it pleased God to bless my weak beginnings to the edification of some, and to the illumination, and, I hope, true conversion of others. This being observed by some leading men among the baptized churches, for to them I was now related, I was chosen, though God knows unwillingly, to the office of presbyter, to take the oversight of a small congregation; and solemnly ordained, by fasting and prayer, and laying on of hands, of such as were ordained before me." [Ibid., p. 100.] This took place in 1656: when, though only twenty two years of age, he was chosen pastor to the church which had been gathered by the exertions of himself and the three friends who separated with him from the paedobaptists. Being settled in church order, Mr. Grantham laboured assiduously, and the church flourished under his care. Some attempts were made to disturb their peace, during the government of Cromwell, though, probably without his knowledge or countenance. Warrants were obtained against them, on false accusations; and Mr. Grantham and others were hailed before the magistrate. But they cleared themselves, and were discharged. They went on cheerfully preaching the gospel, not only in Halton, where Mr. Grantham dwelt, but in most of the neighboring towns and villages. They frequently were roughly treated by the mob, who sometimes interrupted them in their discourses, dragged them out of the meeting-houses, and even stoned them. It seems that, in some instances, the magistrates themselves acted contrary to the professed principles of the Protector's government: for Mr. Grantham complains, thirty years afterwards that, "in the time of Cromwell's usurpation, they did then hale us before the judgment-seats, because we could not worship God after the will of their Lord Protector; for so they styled him, in their articles against us. And we had then our goods taken away, and never restored to this day." [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 86.] The baptists bore all with moderation and patience; and proceeded diligently in their endeavours to spread the gospel. At length, they obtained a grant of Northolmchapel, near Wainfleet; in which they continued several years, and had much success. One of their converts, Mr. John Watts, is mentioned as a "person very eminent, of honest repute and good note, in those parts." He was educated at the university; but, as he could not conscientiously conform to all the ceremonies of the established church, he obtained no preferment in it. He became the pastor of a society of baptists, which met in his own house. [Ibid. Vol. III. pp. 78, 79.]

It appears, also, that there were, during the protectorate, other general baptist churches, in different parts of Lincolnshire, which had regular officers, and were in a flourishing state. On Sep 11th, 1653, a letter was read in the church at Fenstanton, from the general baptist church at Westby, Lincolnshire: which was dated Aug. 27th 1653, and signed by Thomas Williams, messenger; John Alleine, pastor; Kimmidge Wortley, deacon; J. Bullimer, W. Bullimer, J. Ibit, R. Wright and R. Cox. its object was, to enquire into the conduct of two messengers, John Lupton and Joseph Wright, who had been sent from them into the county of Huntingdon. This letter gives a favourable idea of the number and order of the general baptists in those parts of Lincolnshire; as they had three messengers, besides pastors and deacons. They entertained lofty notions of the power of the congregation, and

granted extensive commissions to the messengers whom they sent to other places. In the commission granted to John Lupton and Joseph Wright, they said, "We give them power and authority to call in question all persons, and to judge and determine all matters." Such a general warrant justly excited the jealousy of the baptists at Fenstanton; and they excepted against it. On this, J. Wright was observed to blot something out of his credentials; and, when he arrived at the next stage, the offensive clause had disappeared. The church at Westby, however, hearing of this manœuvre, disapproved of the conduct of their messenger, and sent this letter to enquire into the circumstances.

They also took this occasion to request the church at Fenstanton to send them the scripture grounds, on which they permitted persons, who had not submitted to the ordinance of laying on of hands, to communion with them: and why they broke bread in remembrance of Christ's death, at or after a feast or supper. For these Lincolnshire general baptists were strict in their discipline; and admitted none to the Lord's table with them who did not coincide, in every respect, with their sentiments. It is evident, however, from their letter, that there were many churches, in the same county, that differed from them, in both the particulars mentioned. The answer of the church at Fenstanton to these inquiries breathes such a spirit of Christian candour and forbearance, that we presume our readers will be pleased to read an extract from it, though it may, perhaps, be a little misplaced.

"Concerning your second demand," they say, "why we do admit into the fellowship those who are disobedient to part of Christ's doctrine, viz. the laying on of hands on all baptized believers; we answer, Because we judge them faithful in the lord, although ignorant in that particular: and it is written, 'him that is weak in the faith receive;' and we read that Apollos was fervent in the spirit, instructed in the way of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Such we desire to take into our bosom: and, with all meekness and patience, to instruct them more perfectly in the way of the Lord, rather than to reject them, which we do not see any warrant to do. Dear brethren, we are not ignorant of the wiles of Satan, who seeketh by all means to make divisions and separations in the church of Christ; that so he may hinder the building of the Lord.

"Unto your third request, to know our grounds of breaking bread after supper, we do judge it a safe and blameless way, to follow a practice so often recorded in the scripture. Christ did institute it after supper; and it appears that the Corinthians did so practise: and that they are not blamed for supping, but for their disorder in supping. Sure we have more to say for ourselves than if it should be demanded of us, why we should receive it before supper. Yet, dear brethren, we do not judge the churches of Christ: neither do we lay it upon churches, as a command from the Lord; neither any farther binding than an example in this kind may be binding. And for a feast of love in the church of God, if the scripture had not spoken of it all, which yet it doth often, yet we find it very necessary, the brethren coming from far, that the congregation should be refreshed before it be dismissed. Holy brethren, if we have offended, we shall be ready to correct ourselves, when it shall appear to us that we walk, in any thing, contrary to that anointing which dwelleth in you and all the saints, leading you into all truth. We beseech you, brethren, pray for us, that we may labour together in the unity of the faith; that we may be like

minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that we may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The brethren with us salute you all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you all. Amen. Your brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ, JOHN DENNE. From Caxton, the 25th day of 7th Month, 1653."

It would have been well if the baptists at Westby had adopted the candid and healing sentiments that prevail in this letter; and ceased to have placed so much importance on these controverted points. This unhappily was not the case: and two years afterwards, a division took place in this church. Those who adopted a supper before the breaking of bread separated from those who did not; and refused to have any communion with them. The latter wrote to the churches in Huntingdonshire to desire that Mr. H. Denne should be sent to endeavour to reconcile their differences; but as he was, at that time, on a mission to Canterbury, their request could not be granted. [F.S.R. pp. 92, 101, 204.--This society appears to have spread over many Villages. Westby, Welby and Easton, are particularly mentioned; the two former are situated three or four miles east of Grantham, and the third about seven miles south of the same town; in the south west part of Lincolnshire.]

At this period, there existed also a number of general baptists in those parts of Lincolnshire about Bourn, and Market Deeping. Sept. 20. 1653 a long letter was received at Fenstanton from "the church of God in and about Langtoft and Thurlby," dated at Norborow, Sept. 18. 1653, and signed by John Bissell, Francis Wright, John Whalpoule, Rob. Dyer, Edm. Claxton, Richard Wale, John Measure, Will Lane, John Cattell, Jonas Johnson, and Rob. Workes. From this letter we learn, that some time previous to this date, there had been a public dispute at Caistor, between the baptists and the priests;* and that H. Denne had been invited to assist in this debate. Many being convinced of the propriety of believers' baptism, by this conference, they united together; and soon after requested the same active minister to pay them another visit, and assist in forming them into a regular church. This appears to have taken place at a meeting, at Helpstone: and Robert Wright, one of their members, was chosen pastor. This church did not practise the laying on of hands; but Mr. Wright had not been long their pastor before he professed to be convinced that this practice was sanctioned by the scriptures. This caused considerable uneasiness between him and the people: and Mr. Oates, of London, being in the neighbourhood, was desired to converse with him. After a full discussion of the subject, Mr. Wright seemed to give up the practice as dubious; and engaged to leave the church to act according to its own views respecting it; provided that he might do the same. This compromise did not produce any lasting peace. Disputes soon broke out afresh: and proceeded to such a length, that Mr. Wright and his adherents withdrew from the church; and adopted, not only the practice of laying on of hands, but also the washing of feet, and a feast before the Lord's supper. The people whom they had left, thinking this conduct irregular, had put him and his followers under the censure of the church; and threatened to proceed to excommunication against them. Before they took this severe step, they thought proper to submit the case to the friends in Huntingdonshire, and to solicit their advice and assistance. This was the object of the letter from which these particulars are gathered. In compliance with their request, John Denne, and Edmund Mayle, two elders

of the church at Fenstanton were sent over to assist them: and were the happy instruments of restoring harmony amongst all parties. [F.S.R. pp. 94-99, and 102.]

[*It is not clear whether the episcopalian or presbyterian ministers be meant in this place: as the G.B.s used to call them all priests who partook of the emoluments of the establishment.]

During this disagreeable altercation, we are informed, that friends were invited to assist them from other societies, at Burly, Peterborough and Surfleet; and that Mr. Coale and Mr. Spener were especially requested to attend their meetings. From this we may conclude, that there were at this time, general, baptist churches in those places, and that these two were leading men among them. [Ibid. p. 97.]

There was also a church of general baptists at Coningsby and Tattershall, during the government of Cromwell. The first entry in the original church-book of Coningsby, now before us, stands thus: "This book was bought by John Lupton, at London: and is to keep in memory such things as are of much concernment to the baptized people and churches in Lincolnshire; and in special for the congregation at Coningsby and Tattershall. Sept. 29th. 1657. JOHN LUPTON."

SECT. 11.--General Baptist churches in the counties adjoining to Lincolnshire, before the Restoration.

Mr. R. Wright did not continue long with the people at Thurlby: for, in 1655, we find him preaching for a general baptist church, at Peterborough, in the adjoining county of Northampton. How long this church had existed, previous to this date, we have no means of determining. It appears not to have adopted the practice of the laying on of hands, till the beginning of that year. On April 22d. 1655, Thomas Pierson, a member of this society, applied to the church at Fenstanton, requesting, that some elder might be sent to them, to administer that ordinance. John Denne and Edmund Mayle were accordingly sent; and, on May 10th, 1655, attended a meeting of the Peterborough friends, and laid hands on fourteen persons. They were afterwards informed, that Robert Wright maintained doctrines that tended to licentiousness; and were desired to admonish him of his errors. This they did; but it produced little effect. In the following August, Messrs. Denne and Mayle visited Peterborough again, at the earnest solicitations of the friends there, to take the matter into further consideration. They were pleased to find Mr. Thomas Lamb, of Colemanstreet, at that place: and, in conjunction with him, proceeded to examine the charges against Mr. Wright. The result was, an unanimous resolution that, if he should, notwithstanding the reproofs of the church, continue to maintain those opinions, they would have no communion with him. The opinions held by Mr. Wright, for which he was censured, are thus recorded: "1. That the Lord Jesus Christ, by his death, hath taken away all sin, whether past, present, or to come: and 2. That believers ought not to pray for the pardon of any sin." [F.S.R. pp. 211, 214, 224, 232, 233.] What effect this measure had, we are not informed; as we hear nothing more of this society for many years.

About this time, the general baptists were numerous and active in various parts of Cambridgeshire. At Wisbeach, a number of persons of this persuasion appear to have supported the cause for some time, without being regularly organized as a church. Two leading men among them were Mr. John Milles and Mr. Taylor. The former wrote to the church at Fenstanton; Feb. 20th 1655, giving an account of the state of the congregation: and earnestly beseeching them, to send faithful messengers, "to do the work of the Lord, and to administer his ordinances to those amongst them, whose hearts were free and ready to embrace the truth." In compliance with this invitation, John Denne and Edmund Mayle were sent to Wisbeach; and on April 9th attended a meeting of the congregation. They were gladly received by the brethren; but found them much divided in their sentiments concerning several points of discipline especially respecting the imposition of hands. Mr. Taylor strongly opposed the practice; but Mr. Denne and his companion answered his objections so much to the satisfaction of the congregation, that thirteen of them submitted to the ordinance, and the opposers of it were silenced. These messengers afterwards composed some differences between the church and John Milles, and prepared for their departure. The Wisbeach friends having many things in which they desired their assistance, requested them to continue with them some time longer. The messengers, however did not feel themselves authorized to extend their visit without the authority of the congregation, which had sent them; but promised, on their return, to lay their request before their church: which they did, and the friends at Fenstanton agreed that they should pay a second visit to Wisbeach.

These ministers, therefore, set out, on May 13, following; but Mr. Denne was recalled, after he had begun his journey, on account of some occurrences at home. Mr. Mayle, on his arrival at Wisbeach, found there Messrs. J. Lupton and J. Wright, the two Lincolnshire messengers: who insisted, that it was the duty of those who practised laying on of hands to separate from those who did not, and to have no communion with them. This being contrary to the opinion of the baptists in Huntingshire, caused considerable discussion: and the minds of the friends became too much agitated to proceed to any regular determination. Mr. Mayle returned, and left termination. Messrs. Lupton and Wright. These messengers did not, however, settle the controversy: for, in the September succeeding, in compliance with the earnest request of the baptists at Wisbeach, Messrs. Denne and Mayle paid them another visit. On their return, they gave a pleasing account of their proceedings, to a general meeting of their own congregation, Oct. 7th. 1655.-- This report, containing several interesting particulars, we shall insert, in their own words; as a specimen of the manner in which their records were kept.

On the seventh day of the eighth month, at a general meeting of the congregation, held at Papworth Everard, after prayer and supplication to the Lord, and some words of doctrine and exhortation, Edmund Mayle spake as followeth: viz.; "Brethren, according to your order, upon the two and-twentieth of the seventh month, our brother Denne and myself went to Wisbeach; where we were joyfully received by the brethren."

The next day, being the first day of the week, the brethren did assemble together; and we being present with them, after we had prayed, they desired us to speak some words of exhortation, which accordingly we did. After this, the brethren did certify us, that they

were all convinced of the doctrine of laying on of hands; yea, even Brother Taylor, who was so mightily against it, when we were with them before. They likewise desired us to administer it unto them; which accordingly we did: praising and glorifying the name of the Lord, for that he had wrought such, unity that day.

After this, the congregation certified us, that they had chosen officers amongst themselves, both elders and deacons: and they desired, that they might be ordained by us. We demanded who they were that they had chosen. They then declared their names to us: Edmund Smith, and Israel Cave, were chosen elders. We then desired to know whether there had been a free election, according to the rule of the holy scripture, with the consent of the whole congregation; and we likewise desired, that if any person belonging to the congregation had any thing to object against the persons nominated, they would freely speak, and declare what they had to say: but there was not any that objected, but every one testified their free assent, according to their former election. Whereupon we prayed to the Lord for them, that he would indue them with Wisdom, and in every thing fit them for the work unto which he had called them. After which we ordained them, by the ordinance of laying on of hands and prayer: whereupon there was much joy in the congregation, and prayer was rendered unto God: and so the assembly was dismissed. The next day, when we had prayed and taken leave of the brethren, we returned home." [F.S.R. pp. 192, 208, 216, 224, 232, 238.]

In the same county, there was also another general baptist society, at Littleport, in the Isle of Ely, under the care of Samuel and Ezekiel Cater, as Elders; two persons of considerable eminence in the church. Both these embraced the doctrine of the quakers; and carried along with them many of the members. Report of this defection being brought to a conference of baptist ministers, at Cambridge, May 3rd. 1655, they proceeded to consider the case; and sent two messengers, John Ray and John Tabram, to reprove them; and, if they did not repent, to degrade them from their eldership, and afterwards to excommunicate them. In virtue of this appointment, these two ministers arrived at Littleport, on the following day: and, learning that the quakers were assembled in an orchard, immediately went thither. Perceiving the two Caters present, John Ray proceeded to execute his commission. "I made my speech," says he, in a letter to the churches, to certify them of his proceedings, "I made my speech in the audience of them all: declaring, that I was sent, with brother Tabram, from the general assembly of the elders and brethren of the church of Christ, assembled the third day of May, at Cambridge, who did, after mature consideration, determine that we should come both to degrade and excommunicate these two apostates Samuel and Ezek. Cater. After this was done, I charged all good people, in the name of the Lord Jesus, likewise to disown them; so far as to have nothing to do with them at all: neither to receive them into their houses, nor yet to wish them 'God speed;' no, nor yet to entertain any discourse or dispute with them; but to shun them, and all such profane and vain babblers and babbling, because their words will eat as doth a canker; and increase unto more ungodliness: and, therefore, they were much rather to be shunned than reasoned with."

After this thundering speech, Mr. Ray went to the parish church, with the unanimous consent of the inhabitants of the town; the greatest part of whom followed him. There he

declared, publicly, for what purpose he was come to that place, and by whose authority: and afterwards preached Jesus to them, both in his person and offices, from 2 Pet. 2:20, 21, Before he had concluded, the quakers came, in a body to the church, and railed against him with great rudeness; but he, esteeming them past conviction, had come to a previous resolution, not to attempt to reason with them, and, therefore left the church, without replying to their invectives.--The next day, the baptists held another meeting, in a private house, and were again interrupted by the quakers. It seems, from a list subjoined to this account, that twelve members of this little church, became quakers, and twenty-two remained stedfast to their principles. [F.S.R. pp. 213, 217.--In 1657, James Parnell, one of the quakers who were present when John Ray excommunicated J. and E. Cater, published an account of that transaction, which, when no divinations, in which believers' baptism was defended from Col. 2:12. When J. R. had concluded, J. P. stood up and claimed a right, from the usage of the primitive church, 1 Cor. 14:30, 31, to speak in his turn. He proceeded to confute the sentiments just delivered from the pulpit; and, if we credit him, drove the preacher discomfited out of the steeple-house.--The next day there was another squabble between these two parties, when J. Tabram pushed the quaker out of doors; who, in return, shook off the dust of his feet against the baptists. (Parnell's Watcher, or Stone cut out of the Mountain without hands striking at the feet of Jesus. 1657. p. 38, &c.)]

These public excommunications and interdictions certainly discovered no small disposition to lord it over other men's faith; and would have proceeded with more grace and consistency from we consider the different views of the narrators, agrees very well with the relation given by J. Ray. According to him, when J. R. had finished his speech J.P. rebuked him. J.R. however, declined staying to hear him; but informed them that he might be found shortly at the steeple-house. J.P. after his departure continued his harangue as long as he pleased; and then went in search of him to the parish church. "I found thee, John Ray," says he, "set in the chiefest place in the assembly, in the seat of the Pharisee, speaking a divination of thine own brain." The quaker then gives a curious account of the sermon, which, as he asserts, consisted of meanings, uses, applications, a conclave of cardinals, than from a meeting of a few lay preachers, and their hearers, assembled at the dwelling house of Brother Hindes, at Cambridge. But the extravagant and impious opinions and practices which, in those times of licentiousness, disgraced many professors of religion, made it necessary for the friends of truth and sobriety to draw the line of distinction plain and strong, that they might not be involved in the odium of tenets which they abhorred. This may excuse, but cannot justify the measures we have just contemplated.

There was also a general baptist church at Streatham, in the county of Cambridge, which, in 1656, was under the pastoral care of John Tabram. It appears to have been numerous and flourishing; as, on Oct. 26th. of that year, Messrs. J. Denne and E. Mayle, in compliance with their earnest request, paid them a visit; and assisted in the ordination of two teachers and one deacon. The names of the former were, Thomas Bedford and Robert Gardiner; and of the latter Thomas Gotobed. Thomas Bedford soon after removed to Hawson, and fell into divers immoralities, which obliged the brethren to withdraw from their communion with him. And, though he afterwards earnestly applied for re-admission

into their society; yet, his conduct, not being consistent with his profession, he was refused. [F.S.R., pp. 298, 306, 324, 327, 341, 349.]

Besides these societies of general baptists which we have already enumerated, we have notices of several others in the same county, which appear to have been at this period numerous and respectable. Many of the branches of the church of Fenstanton were scattered in various parts of Cambridgeshire. Mr. Henry Denne resided at Elsley, and had many adherents: and his son John, who was for many years a principal elder in that church, dwelt at Caxton pastures. In most of the towns and villages bordering on Huntingdonshire, there were societies of general baptists,; most of whom were considered as united with Fenstanton church: but there were others that acted as distinct churches. The following transaction brings some of them to view.

November 17th. 1654, a fire broke out on the premises of John Wilson, of Great Eversden, a farmer, and member of Fenstanton church; which, in a short time consumed his barns and all his out-houses, together with his whole stock of hay and grain. He asked the advice of the church on the propriety of applying to the magistrates for letters of request to the inhabitants of. the county. A meeting was called, to consider of the subject; and, as it was thought that the honour of the gospel was deeply interested in it, the final adjustment was referred to a general meeting of two brethren from each church in the neighbourhood. This was summoned to meet at Cambridge, on December 8th; when it was unanimously agreed to help their distressed brother amongst themselves, and neither to apply to the county, nor to distant churches. The brethren present therefore promised, on the behalf of their respective societies, each to give a certain sum. Brother Hindes, of Cambridge, was appointed treasurer; and the money ordered to be all paid into his hands, before the first day of the ensuing month. The whole loss was estimated at thirty pounds; of which the congregation at Fenstanton agreed to raise six. The other churches, to which invitations were sent on this occasion, are thus recorded:-"1. To Warboys and Chatteris. 2. To Ely, Littleport, and Streatham. 3. To Cambridge. 4. To Salsham, Burwell, and Wigan. 5. To Wood-Ditton and the places adjacent. 6. To Wilbroim [probably Wilbraham] and Balsham. 7. To Melbourn, Royston, Hawson, and Thaxfield." These societies appear to have punctually filled the engagements entered into by their representatives; except Thaxfield church, the elder of which, Anthony Grey, objected to the mode of assessment. [F.S.R. pp. 154, 163, 172.] Though we shall probably meet with no other mention of some of these societies; yet there is every reason to believe, that, during the protectorate of Cromwell, there existed a regular general baptist church at each of these places.

SECT. 12.--The Transaction of the General Baptist Church at Fenstanton, Hunts.

We have seen, already, that the general baptist society at Fenstanton was flourishing, in the year 1644, and had their regular officers. [See above, p. 104.] Mr. Henry Denne appears to have been a principal instrument in gathering it, and a diligent labourer in it. But his active disposition, and the great usefulness of his labours, both as a preacher and disputant, often leading him to distant places, to plant new churches, or to set in order those which he had already planted; it does not appear that he was ever considered as the

settled pastor over any congregation; though he was many years a regular member of this church.

In the close of the year 1651, our official account of the proceedings of this society commence. At that time, it was numerous and extended, on every side, over many villages. John Denne, the son of H. Denne, just mentioned, and Edmond Mayle, were co-pastors; or, as they were then called, joint elders; and they had several other acceptable preachers. About this period, the quakers, ranters, and other enthusiasts were very active in spreading their extravagant notions; and too successful in making proselytes. Many members of this church fell into their errors: and, pretending to have superior manifestations of the Holy Spirit within, despised the scriptures, and neglected the means of grace. A number of persons belonging to this congregation, resided at Yelling, amongst whom these opinions had gained many advocates. The first church act, contained in their Records, is a sensible letter to these deluded people, dated Dec. 10th. 1651; and signed by John Denne, Edmond Mayle, John Disbrow, and Thomas Cox. Cox.

After some pious and affectionate salutations, they say, "Brethren, we do much rejoice to hear of the great manifestations that God, if it be as you say, hath been pleased to give unto you; earnestly desiring that the Lord would confirm you more and more, until you be perfected in the knowledge of God: for it is our desire, and above all things we wish, that all the Lord's people were prophets. But, beloved brethren, we wonder much to hear, that you are in doubt how you should try the spirits. What! know ye not your own minds, that you ought to try the spirits by the scriptures, which are able to make a man of God perfect unto salvation? We beseech you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you would meditate on the holy scriptures; and receive them, as a light to your feet, and as a lantern to your path, to guide you in the way of truth; and in no wise receive, any inward manifestations above, or contrary to, the written word." After urging the propriety and necessity of attending to this advice, from a variety of excellent topics, they conclude thus: "We write not these things as judging you; but in love, to warn you: that you might take heed of the temptations of Satan, and continue stedfast in the ways of our Lord God: to whom, with his Son, and the blessed Spirit, be all honour praise, and thanksgiving, both now and for evermore." [F.S.R. pp. 4-6.]

Notwithstanding the affectionate and timely admonitions of their friends, these enthusiasts persisted in their errors. Some of them carried their impiety and folly so far, that they derided all the ordinances of christianity, declared that they were arrived at perfection, and would not follow the apostles, who were poor imperfect creatures:--slighted the scriptures of truth, and refused to be guided by them;--asserted that all things were God, and that there was no sin; and many other unintelligible fancies. The church exercised great forbearance towards them; and took great pains to convince them of their errors; but without effect: and, in the beginning of the next year, 1662, they were obliged to exclude a considerable number some of whom became, afterwards, leading men amongst the quakers. [F.S.R. pp. 12, 17, 19, &c.]

These zealous baptists appear to have been very attentive to discipline: and their elders much employed in travelling from place to place, to comfort the afflicted, strengthen the

weak, encourage the desponding, reclaim the wandering, and rebuke the gainsayers. This, however, did not satisfy their enlarged desires: they panted to be more extensively useful. At a general church-meeting, Oct. 23d. 1653, Mr. H. Denne put the brethren in mind of the commission of Christ, "Preach the gospel to every creature." "I desire," said he, "that we may seriously consider whether we are not in a great fault, in being so negligent in sending forth persons to divulge the gospel in those many places that are ignorant thereof. Truly I conceive we are much to blame; and, especially, seeing there are many towns hereabouts that have no teachers: and who can tell but the Lord may work in this opportunity!" [Ibid. p. 104.] The congregation, convinced of the justice of this charge, appointed the 28th of the same month for a day of fasting and prayer, to confess their fault in this matter, and to humble themselves before God. On that day, Mr. Denne "was chosen and ordained, by imposition of hands, a messenger to divulge the gospel of Jesus Christ." At the same time, John Gilman was elected a deacon. [F.S.R. p. 105.]

On the 3d of November, Henry Denne set out from Elsley, on his tour, accompanied by Christopher Marriatt. They visited Kingston, Toft, Hasingfield, Hawson, Cambridge,* and Shelford in Cambridgeshire; Littlebury, and Newport** in Essex; and returned through Royston, Melbourne, and Cambridge to Elsley, on the fourteenth day of the same month. On the twentieth they gave a written account of their proceedings to the congregation by which they had been sent forth, which is preserved in their Records. In most of the places which they visited, Mr. Denne preached with great acceptance, and declared the ordinances of the gospel. In some he baptized several; and, in many, he found persons who had formerly been united with the baptists, to whom he administered rproof and admonition. It appears, on the whole, that this short journey produced good effects.

[** "The same night," say these messengers in their report, "we went to Newport in Essex, where we entered into the house of one Fordam, a tanner, unto whom we declared the end of our coming to enquire after the people and to know their state. He told us, we were welcome, desired us to sit down, and commanded meat to be set before us." After they had eaten, their generous host began a long mystical discussion, to prove--that the human soul was God--that there exists nothing besides God--that men sinned by the power of God--that there is no sin, &c. These extravagant doctrines alarmed his pious guests. "We went aside," say they, "and consulted together whether it were safe for us to abide in the house all night; though it was late: and we were both pressed in spirit to depart. We then came to him again, and told him, that, forasmuch as we did perceive, that he had forsaken the faith and followed delusions, we could not but judge, that God was not in that place; and therefore we were resolved to depart. He desired us not to be angry; if we would stay, we should be welcome. We answered, we were not angry; but grieved much to hear such things from him. We departed, and went up and down the town to find a lodging in the night: which at last God provided for us. We cannot perceive, but that all fear of God, as far as we can see, is extinct in that place."--F. S. R. pp. 111, 114.]

[* Mr. Denne and his companions spent the first Lord's day of this tour at Cambridge, where their friends procured for them the use of "a place in public," most probably the parish church, and Mr. Denne preached to a numerous and attentive auditory. In his discourse, he took occasion to assert believers' baptism, oppose infant sprinkling, and

prove that ordinances had not ceased. Many professed to be convinced; but desired time for consideration and instruction. The itinerants therefore proposed to return and preach again the next Lord's day: when they arrived, however, at the time appointed, some discontented persons had exerted themselves to get "the place in public" shut against them; and they spent the day in a private meeting for exercise and prayer, with the brethren, at the house of brother Hindes.--F. S. R. pp. 106. 115.]

On the 19th of November, Mr. H. Denne, at the earnest request of many of the inhabitants of Hawson and Shelford, paid another visit to those places. The clergy man and chief men of Hawson requested him to preach in the parish church.--With this request he complied; but a mob, instigated, as it afterwards appeared, by the same persons who had invited him, collected together, and would not suffer him to proceed. He, therefore, left the church; and, going to a private house, he preached there to a numerous audience, in defence of his peculiar tenets. Next day he went to Shelford; but a clergyman, who was a justice of the peace, exerted himself to prevent the people from going to hear him. His discourse, however, had a good effect; and two persons followed him to Hawson, and were baptized. A third offered himself; but wished to stipulate for liberty to hear the ministers of the church of England as often as he pleased. Mr. D. asked him whether he esteemed them the ministers of Christ or antichrist. The man confessed they were the ministers of antichrist; but urged that they preached some good things. "Yes," replied H. Denne, "and so did the devil, when he said that Jesus was the Son of God." At length, the candidate confessed that he held a farm of a gentleman, who would turn him out, if he knew that he was baptized. H. Denne observed, that the earth was the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; and exhorted him to trust in God, and he would be a better landlord to him than his present one. The man promised to consider of it, and departed; but, like the rich young man in the gospel, it does not appear that he ever returned. [F.S.R. pp. 115-117.]

A transaction of a more private nature, which took place about this time, is recorded; and ought to be preserved. A poor woman, of the name of Mary Whittock, a member of the church at Fenstanton, had procured a livelihood, by hawking small wares round the country. She had an infirm mother, and several small children dependent on her for support. In the beginning of the winter of 1653, her mother being much indisposed, and the weather inclement, she was unable to travel as usual, and was reduced to distress and want. She had been driven from several places by the parish officers, who feared that she would become chargeable to them. At last, she sought an asylum at Royston; but was ordered away from that town, under the same apprehensions. Thus, destitute of shelter, and not knowing whither to direct her steps to obtain support, she was found, Nov. 30th. by Mr. H. Denne, and Mr. Gilman, another worthy minister of the same church, who had gone to Royston on business. They immediately took the out case into their care, and carried her in their market cart, to Caxton. Here Mr. J. Denne took her into his house, supplied her wants for several weeks, and then laid her case before the connection. Three brethren were appointed by the church to provide her suitable lodgings and accommodation; and, lest she should again be disturbed by the parish security was given that she should not become chargeable to it. After nourishing her and her dependents through the severest part of the winter, they supplied her with money to purchase a small

stock of goods, that she might resume her little trade; and gave her a letter of recommendation to the neighbouring churches. [Ibid pp, 118, 123.--Mr. Edwards is much displeased with Mr. Denne for disgracing the dignity of the ministerial office, by having been seen driving a cart on the road to London. If this was the occurrence to which he refers, we may venture to leave it to the judgment of every true gentleman, whether Mr. D. or Mr. E. were more honourably employed: the one, in conducting a distressed. sister to relief and protection; the other in raking the kennels of calumny and prejudice for dirt, with which to blacken the characters of contemporaries more worthy than himself.--Edward's Grangraena. Part, I. p. 106.]

The ministers of this church were very successful in their endeavours to spread the knowledge of the gospel. It appears, from a Register of Baptisms preserved in Warboys' church book, that, in less than four years, commencing from the close of 1651, there were added to the churches of Fenstanton and Warboys only, by baptism, more than one hundred and seventy persons; most of whom resided in those two places, or in their immediate neighbourhood. When it is recollected, that this Society then spread over many towns and villages, in several adjacent counties, their numbers must have been great. The discipline of this church, during this period, appears to have been diligently exercised: and, notwithstanding the distance of many branches of the congregation, there was a vigilant inspection maintained, not only over the conduct, but also over the opinions of the members. Indeed, the strange and impious tenets which were then propagated by many wild enthusiasts, rendered such a watchful jealousy highly necessary. The quakers, especially, were very busy in those parts, and several baptists were led away by them. In the beginning of 1654, when Messrs. J. Denne and F. Mayle, by order of the church, visited Bolton and Dunton in Bedfordshire, they found that several of the brethren in those villages had "forsaken the faith;" whom, after many unavailing attempts to reclaim, they were obliged to exclude. [Ibid. pp. 124-133, 134, 135.]

In the following year, 1655, this church suffered a heavy loss, by the defection of one of its principal ministers, who embraced Calvinistic sentiments. This was John Matthews, who, so early as 1647, is mentioned as "a teacher in the church." [See above, p. 106.] He was a preacher of great eminence amongst the general baptists. To adopt the words of his associate, J. Denne, in giving the congregation an account of the, proceedings against him, "He not only owned the truth, but likewise preached it publickly to the world; at which time the Spirit and power of God was so manifested in him, that none of the adversaries durst open their mouths to oppose it." Mr. Matthews, it appears, had gone into Ireland, whether as a preacher or not does not appear. He continued some time in that island; and, on his return, was discovered to have changed his creed, in several particulars. His former friends were grieved at this alteration; and sent Mr. J. Denne, and some other brethren, to converse with him. In this conference, he frankly acknowledged his change of sentiments; but insisted that the general baptists were in an error and that he had discovered the truth. They endeavoured to convince him of the contrary; but he remained unmoved: and told them, that "it was in vain to multiply words about the matter; for he knew what they could say; he being once as ready to say the same things. "Whereupon," says J. Denne, "we did, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, reprove him

for his sin, exhorting him to consider from whence he was fallen, and repent and turn unto the Lord; if, peradventure "the thought of his heart might be forgiven him. But he refused to hearken to our words." Afterwards other messengers were sent to admonish him a second and a third time: but their reproofs were as ineffectual as their arguments, and he still persisted in his opinions. He was therefore, at last, summoned before the church: when the congregation, after repeating their arguments, reproofs, and exhortations, and "finding no hope of recovery, but a stubborn persisting in his evil, delivered him unto Satan." The heresies of this deserter are thus described:--The things affirmed by him, contrary to the doctrine believed by us, and formerly preached by him, are as followeth: "1. That Christ died only for his elect, even such s either do or shall believe in him.--2. That God by him, are as followeth: "1. That Christ died only for his elect, even such s either do or shall believe in him.--2. That God from the beginning, chosen a certain number of persons to himself: to which persons he cometh with such a compulsive power that they cannot resist.--3. That God hath, from the beginning, preordained a certain number of persons to condemnation, from which persons he withholdeth all manner of power, so that there is not any possibility of their believing." [F.S.R. pp. 226-231.]

It must be painful to every candid mind, to observe men, who could so forcibly plead the cause of religious liberty against the encroachment of the civil power, assume to themselves the right of "delivering their fellow-christians to Satan," for venturing to differ from them in sentiment. Their censures were, however, wholly spiritual: and, while they thus freely dispensed the sentences of the congregation, they disclaimed every idea of men's circumstances, as members of society being affected by any decision of the church. Another opportunity may occur, when it will be proper to shew, that they affixed significations to the most grating terms much less offensive than a modern reader would suppose is pleasing to observe, that these old general baptists were men of principle and decision; hearty in the defence of what they esteemed the doctrines of the gospel; and determined to have no fellowship with those who dishonoured or opposed them.

The affairs of the church at Fenstanton continued to exhibit the usual mixture of pleasing and painful events: but for several years the cause flourished, and their members increased. Their judicious and laborious ministers not only superintended their own flock with affection, diligence, and zeal; but were very instrumental in gathering, and setting in order, distant churches; in composing differences among their neighbours; and in promoting the interests of religion, and the good of society. Their Records afford abundant evidence of the truth of these assertions; but it would far exceed the limits of this work to enter into the detail. What has already been said will give the reader some idea of the flourishing state of this society during the protectorate of Cromwell.

The circumstances of the neighbouring church at Warboys, during this period, were very similar to those at Fenstanton. Its formation has been already noticed. [See above, p. 104.] In the years 1648 and 1649, the hearers increased, and several were added to the church: but, in the following year, the quakers, ranters, and levellers seduced so many of the members, that the remainder were discouraged, and the regular meetings of tile congregation were much neglected. For a short season, indeed, they appear to have been

nearly discontinued. But, in 1651, those who retained their sentiments, and wished for the success of the cause, were encouraged and assisted by the elders of Fenstanton to seek out one another, and resume their stated assemblies. And the next year, William Dunn was again chosen, by lot, for overseer; and John Richards for deacon.

In three years after this date, the cause had so much prospered, that it was thought necessary to increase the number of their officers: when Thomas Chapman was chosen as joint elder with William Dunn; and John Stockley and Richard Hawkins were added to the deacons. These were all ordained by Messrs. J. Denne and Edmond Mayle. About this time, also the practice of imposition of hands, and of a feast before the Lord's supper, were adopted by this Society; because "the ancient churches did practice them, and for greater unity with other churches near to them."

In the succeeding years, 1656 and 1657, many were baptized: but they were obliged to exclude several for disorderly conduct, or erroneous principles. Amongst those who were called to account for their irregularities, was John Dunn, the brother of William Dunn, their elder.--The latter shewed too great an inclination to defend his relation: and this caused a coldness between him and his people. He was, also, about this time, charged with some unsoundness in the faith, and with leaning too much to the church of England: though it is probable that these accusations would not have been heard of, had not the seed's of disaffection been sown by his conduct respecting his relation. His colleague in office, Thomas Chapman, appears to have been his most active accuser. By his influence, the elders of Fenstanton were requested to come over to Warboys, to assist the church in composing this difference. Accordingly, April 15th 1658, Messrs. J. Denne and E. Mayle paid them a visit: and the whole business was laid before them. The result was, that W. Dunn, refusing to acknowledge he had done wrong, was forbidden to preach. On this decision, he absented himself from the public worship of the congregation; and, for that offence, was excommunicated.--These unhappy altercations continuing through the two succeeding years, greatly retarded the progress of the cause; and the success of the gospel.*

[* W. C. B. 1647-1660.--When we consider the characters of the good men who assisted the church on this occasion, we must conclude, that they proceeded on sufficient evidence in censuring William Dunn; otherwise an entry in the church would lead us to suspect the contrary. The entry was made, probably, by Mr. Dunn, himself; and, if we credit it, the only proof they had of his "favouring the priests" was, that he had said, in company with a few friends, that he thought it was better to hear some of the priests, than to sit at home not employed in the service of God.--That Thomas Chapman was his accuser appears from the letter sent to Fenstanton to invite their elders. It runs in this strain. "Brethren, forasmuch as many differences have happened between William Dunn and Thomas Chapman, elders of the church at Warboys;--We beseech you to, send one or two of your elders to hear the said differences between the said elders of Warboys, and to help the brethren at Warboys with your advice for ending them."-- W.B.C. p. 16. F.S. R. p. 365.]

Before we close this section, it may be proper to notice I transaction of a more public nature. A meeting of elders and brethren, from many of the general baptist churches, was held, at Stamford, July 2d and 3d, 1656. A request was sent to this meeting, from a number of general baptists at Uppingham, in Rutlandshire, "that messengers might be sent into the west, for the work of the ministry." Two ministers, John Fairbrother and William Reignolds, were accordingly appointed to this service. It was agreed that each messenger should be allowed ten shillings weekly, for the support of himself and his family, while he was employed in this mission: and certain brethren were appointed by the assembly to take care of their wives and families in their absence. In order to raise the necessary funds for this undertaking, each of the brethren present engaged that his own church should contribute towards the expences; and promised that he would endeavour to "stir up." those societies that lay near him, to assist in the good work. A list of the names of the persons, and of the societies, is preserved: and it is inserted here, as the best catalogue that has come to hand, of the general baptist churches existing, at that time, on the north of the metropolis.

"These, are the names of the persons that did engage for the societies hereafter named: William Inge, and Thomas Christian, for Leicester; and to stir up Eccleshelton and Mountsorrell--John Kirby, for Nottingham; and to stir up Winford and Rimson--Isaac Spener and Christopher Bell, for Peterborough; and to stir up Wisbeach and Fenstanton--Benjamin Morley and Francis Stanley, for Ravensthorpe; and to stir up Newton, and as many as they can--Geo. More, for Whitwell and Markfield; and to stir up Twyford*--Jon Wilkinson to stir up Langtoft, Thurlby, and Bitome." [* The church at Twyford, in Leiestershire, addressed the church at Fenstanton in behalf of a distressed brother, James Arding. The letter was dated, August. 1655, and signed by John Bull, Richard Hill, Charles Latham, William and Thomas Pocklington, and seven others. This is the only notice of this church we have yet seen.--F. S. R, p. 255.]

In pursuance of this arrangement, Messrs. Spener and Bell wrote to the church at Fenstanton, informing them of the design, and requesting their assistance in its execution. This letter is preserved in their Records: and from that source these particulars are drawn. The congregation at Fenstanton, however, declined any immediate co-operation; because that, by the mode proposed, it would, be impossible to ascertain whether the sum collected wasadequate or inadequate: and, because that one of the messengers nominated had formerly fallen from the truth, and joined the ranters; by which he had, in their opinion, forever disqualified himself for hearing any office in the church. This opinion they founded on Ezek. 44: 10-13.

There was a general baptist church, not mentioned in this list, which appears, at this period, to have been n numerous and flourishing: though much disturbed by the contentions which then unhappily agitated the whole body of baptists. This church was gathered about Thorpe and Wackerly, in the county of Rutland. Some of the members of this society held the propriety of laying on hands on baptized believers: but the majority with the elders, Robert Ward and T. Tiptoft, at their head, esteemed it a scriptureless practice; and passed a decree, declaring it unlawful to have communion with those who adopted it. This provoked the minority; and they remonstrated freely against the temper

and manner in which this step had been taken. The other party retorted their charge, by placing their opponents under the discipline of the church, and threatening to proceed against them to excommunication. On this, the minority addressed an epistle to the church at Fenstanton, dated Nov. 29th, 1656, entreating their advice and assistance, a conciliatory letter to the majority: recommending them "to stay the proceedings and to let some brethren, of other churches, who were not concerned in the things in difference, hear the matter." To this proposal the majority at Thorpe returned a decided answer: "As for uniting together again," they say, "it is impossible, unless they disown that which the scriptures will not own. And, whereas you intreat us to stay our proceedings, and to let others, that are not concerned in the difference, have the hearing, thereof; we judge there are none in fellowship, but are either under, or not underlaying on of hands; and so must needs be concerned. And, as for our proceedings, we have the scripture for our warrant, and God and our consciences for our witnesses; and we are determined to follow their counsel therein." When their friendly monitors found them thus resolute, they wisely concluded to "let them alone." In the letter from Fenstanton, there is mention made of a meeting at Leicester, at which it was agreed between those who practised imposition of hands, and those who disowned it, "that the work of the Lord should be carried on together." This agreement excited great joy in the hearts of the candid baptists at Fenstanton; but was the cause of sorrow and grief to the zealots at Thorpe, because "they had joined them from whom they are commanded to withdraw." [F.S.R. pp. 310-316.]

SECT. 13.--The state of the General Baptists in Kent, Sussex, and London, prior to the Restoration.

There is sufficient evidence, that the general baptist cause had gained many proselytes; and that a regular society of that persuasion had been formed at Canterbury, in Kent, prior to the commencement of the civil wars. Messrs. Lamb, H. Denne, Barber, and their associates, were very successful in their itinerant labours in that county, till about the year 1644, when they had great disputes with the particular baptists, which caused considerable ferment. The political confusions that followed increased their disorder; and the enthusiastic opinions, propagated by various sects of professors, seduced too many of the baptists: so that, for many years, genuine religion was almost extinct. [Howard's *Looking Glass for baptists*, pp. 1, 2.]

In 1654, Mr. H. Denne being accidentally at Canterbury, with his usual diligence, took the opportunity of preaching several times in public. In consequence, many of the inhabitants resorted to him, among whom were several that had been formerly baptized by himself; and pressed him to take some stay with them. Though much disposed to yield to their intreaties, he did not esteem himself at his own disposal. He told them that he could not speak either good or bad, but that congregation should say to whom he belonged."

On this, they proposed to send two messengers immediately to Fenstanton, to obtain the consent of that church; but Mr. Denne himself offered to convey their request. On his return, therefore, being personally indisposed, he desired his son, J. Denne, to lay the case of the Canterbury baptists before the church-meeting, on Nov. 5th, 1654: when it was

resolved to send a letter to enquire whether their circumstances and desires remained unchanged. In less than a week, an answer was received, describing their state, and repeating, in very pressing terms, their request. [This letter was dated November 13th, 1654, and subscribed Jonas Cooke, John Wigmore, Thomas Skillett, John Smith, John Gouldhack, John Miles, Richard and Thomas Beacham, Thomas and Daniel Jarman, and John Ratcliffe.]

From this letter we learn, that many years previous to this date, there were a considerable number of general baptists in that place; many of whom had "turned out of the way into the Illystery of iniquity," having become ranters, &c. by whose means the way of truth had obtained an evil report:--that, during this time of darkness and disgrace, there always had been a few that owned the principles of the gospel of Christ;" but, "for want of inward and outward abilities," were unable to make any effectual stand against the general declension; especially as they were in a state of disorder, and without any regular officers:--that, Mr. Denne's discourses, which had animated these to a re-union, had been instrumental also in reclaiming some of the fallen, and excited the attention of many:--that a respectable party now earnestly wished for him to reside for a time among them; because they esteemed, him to be endued by "God, with wisdom and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel: and able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers."

After considering this request, the church at Fenstanton, though not without much debate, agreed to this resolution: That the congregation is unwilling to lay such a burden upon our brother Denne, as to send him such a long journey, contrary to his own mind; but if he should be willing to go to reside there, the congregation would condescend thereunto." When this resolution was imparted to Mr. Denne, he declared his willingness to go; but was dissatisfied with the act of the church, "because it was not an express commission." A regular commission, was therefore, granted to him; and notified, in due form, to the friends at Canterbury.*--Money, horses, and necessaries were provided by the society for his journey, and brother Catlin appointed to accompany him. Mar. 11th, 1655, a letter was received, from the congregation, at Canterbury, announcing his safe arrival in that town; and stating that he was provided with a house and comfortable subsistence among them." [F.S.R. pp. 152, 153, 158.--162, 164, 173, 202.] How long Mr. Denne resided at Canterbury, we have no information. As he is no more mentioned in the Records of the church at Fenstanton, it is probable that he did not return thither before the beginning of the year 1658, when those Records close. Of the result of his exertions we are equally ignorant; but there can be no doubt that he laboured diligently and successfully, in converting sinners, in establishing the saints, and in reducing the baptists there into regularity and gospel order.

[* The following is the letter sent on this occasion. "The Brethren in and about Caxton and Fenstanton, in the Counties of Huntington and Cambridge, to the faithful, in Christ Jesus, at Canterbury, wish grace, mercy and peace, from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dear and holy brethren, called out of this present evil world, and sanctified through the knowledge of the truth, by the Spirit of our God, we do greatly rejoice, giving thanks unto our God, who according to the riches of his mercy and the abundant glory of

his grace, manifested in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath shed abroad his love in our hearts; teaching you to love the brethren and to receive the truth in the love and simplicity thereof, as it is in Jesus: being confident, that he which hath began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ. Beloved brethren, we received your letter, dated the thirteenth day of the ninth month, whereby we do understand, that it is your earliest desire, that our beloved brother Denne should come to reside with you: which thing we have taken into our serious consideration. And although, at the first, we were very unwilling to condescend thereunto, being very desirous to enjoy his company with us, that by him we might be edified and comforted in the way of our God; yet taking your condition into our serious consideration, and fearing lest through the love of ourselves we should any ways hinder the honour of God, or good of his people, we have thought fit, in this particular, to satisfy your holy desires; earnestly desiring that he may be beneficial unto YOU, as, blessed be our God, he hath been in this place; both for the enlightening of many persons that sat in blindness, and for the strengthening of the church of God. We beseech you, brethren, pray for us, that we may labour together in the unity of the faith, being filled with the fruits of righteousness and holiness to the glory and praise of God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, farewell. Be of one mind; live in peace; and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit shall be with you all evermore. Amen. Your Brethren, assembled in the name. Caxton, the 31st day of the 10th month, 1654.]

We have, during this period, but little information respecting the state of the general baptist churches in the west of Kent. We may, however, safely conclude, from their subsequent history, that they were prosperous and increasing, under the affectionate and diligent superintendence of their pious founders, Messrs. Jeffery, Hammon, Reeve, &c. Nor did these active men confine their exertions to their pastoral duties: they were frequently engaged in defence of the truth against learned and determined opposers. During the period now under review, Mr. Geo. Hammon, the pastor of the general baptist church at Biddenden, in this county, maintained controversies with Mr. Matthias Rutton, Mr. Hezekiah Holland, and Mr. S. Hendon. Two of these controversies appear to have originated in public personal disputations between the parties, and to have been carried on from the press. Hezekiah Holland was a clergyman, of Sutton Valiance. In the course of these disputes, Mr. Hammon published, 1. "Dagon's Downfall:" 2. "A Discovery of the latitude of the loss of the earthly paradise by original sin; occasioned by a disputation between Mr. M. Ruttona and himself, 1655." 3. "Sion's redemption discovered, 1655." 4. "Sion's Redemption, and Original Sin vindicated; being an answer to Mr. H. Holland, 1658." 5. "Sion's Redemption redeemed." 6. "Truth and Innocency prevailing against Error and Insolency: in an answer to Mr. Holland's book, entitled, 'Truth's Conflict with Error.'" 7. "The Good Ancient Laws and Statutes of King Jesus: occasioned by a conference between himself, Mr. S. Hendon, and his Son John, June 3rd 1658." He published, also, "Annotations on the Ninth Chapter to the Romans;" but its date is not specified. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 104, and private information.] It was, also, in the last year of this period, 1659, that Mr. Jeffery published the second edition of his "Whole Faith of Man." It is very probable, from these numerous publications, that this was a time of considerable zeal, activity, and success among these churches.

Throughout this period, Mr. M. Caffin was labouring, with great success, in Sussex, and the adjacent counties. His church was at Horsham. In September 1655, he had a public dispute with the quakers; which commenced in their meeting house in Crawley, and was adjourned to his own house, near Southwater. [Mr. Caffin's principal opponent published an account of this dispute with this whimsical title: "An untaught Teacher witnessed against: or, the old Bottle's mouth opened, its wine poured forth, drunk of the drunkard, denied of them who have tasted of the new: By Thomas Lawson, 1655." From this tract we have obtained the above hints.]

Mr. Caffin was then so celebrated for his ability in defending the, truth, that, as his opponent informs us, he was "cried up, by the general baptists in Sussex, as their battle-axe and weapons of war." We shall have frequent occasion, in the following pages, to introduce this gentleman to our readers. The general baptist churches in London continued to flourish, during the protectorate of Cromwell. Messrs. Lamb, Griffiths, Gosnold, and Barber were actively employed: and, we shall find in our next chapter that their congregations were numerous, and firmly attached to their principles. But, as these good men quietly and unostentatiously pursued their great work, during this season of religious liberty, few documents of their transactions remain. It is highly probable, too, that the general baptist church in the Old Jewry, of which Mr. Jeremiah was upwards of thirty years pastor, was gathered in this period. We shall have another occasion to speak of the character and sufferings of this valuable minister.

There was also, at this time, another society of general baptists, which assembled at Towerhill, under the pastoral care of Mr. Samuel Loveday; whom Mr. Crosby calls "a learned, pious, and very serious minister of the gospel. [Crosby, Vol. IV. p. 250.] From several circumstances, this congregation appears to have been numerous, respectable, and zealous for the honour and success of the gospel. The church which, at present, meets in Church-lane, Whitechapel, under Mr. Dan Taylor, is the same which, in Cromwell's time, assembled at Tower-hill. The following hints are all the information which we have been able to collect respecting it, belongs to this chapter.

Mr. John Denne, Nov. 1st. 1657, informed the congregation at Fenstanton, that, being lately at London, and "at the assembly of the brethren that meet at Towerhill," he received, from several members of that congregation, a heavy accusation against John Blowes, who, as it appears, was a preacher among the baptists in Huntingdonshire. This person had gone to reside in London, and introduced himself to the friends at Towerhill. Being indisposed soon after his arrival, he contracted debts with his landlady for board and lodging, for which she threatened to arrest him. The members of Mr. Loveday's church, when apprized of these circumstances, "being tender of the honour of God, and their brother's good," voluntarily advanced the money to pay his debts, and procured him accommodations with one of their number. Upon his recovery, instead of gratefully acknowledging their kindness, and exerting himself to repay them, he neglected his business; and privately returned to Huntingdonshire, without satisfying their demands. The church at Fenstanton took up the matter with commendable spirit; and desired Mr. Denne to write to Mr. Loveday, for a confirmation of the charges. Mr. Loveday returned a full explanation of the circumstances; and the delinquent was forbidden to preach, and

suspended from communion. He thought to have escaped the censure of the church, by paying the sums which he owed: but they refused to receive him till he had written a penitent letter to the brethren in London, and satisfied them of his sincere contrition. This he did; and, at length, was restored. [F.S.R. pp. 345, 347, 352, 353, 360, 364.]

In the year 1658, that indefatigable veteran, Henry Denne, whom we lately left at Canterbury, was publickly engaged in defending believer's baptism, at St. Clement's church in the Strand, London, against Dr. Gunning, who was afterwards bishop of Chichester. This disputation lasted two days: and, in conducting it, Mr. Denne proved himself a good scholar, and an able disputant. So triumphantly did he maintain his opinions, that this occurrence has been thought one of the most remarkable passages of his life, and that by which he rendered most essential service to the baptists. When we consider the extent and usefulness of his other labours, this must have contributed very highly to the credit and success of his cause, to have deserved this distinction. [Crosby, Vol. II. p. 306.]

We shall here close our account of the general baptists, under the protectorate. The notices we have been able to collect respecting them, during that period of religious toleration, are disjointed and scattered; and several of the incidents which we have recorded, may, perhaps, be thought too minute and unimportant. But such particulars sometimes afford the best means of ascertaining character: and it was thought, that these authentic details of the proceedings of the churches, at so early a period, might be interesting for their antiquity, and useful to modern societies, either as examples or warnings.--These ancient christians were evidently men of like passions with ourselves; and, by no means, free from the imperfections of human nature. When we consider the circumstances of the times in which they were called to act, it will, in some measure, apologize for their defects and weaknesses: while their zeal for the truth, their love to one another, and their active exertions to spread the gospel, claim our respect and imitation.

Their frequent disputes will certainly excite a sigh in the breast of every sincere lover of peace. It ought, however, to be recollected, that, at this time, men had very recently obtained permission to think and act for themselves in matters of religion: and had hardly learnt to exercise this new right with prudence and moderation. The general baptists appear to have maintained a jealous vigilancy, that no encroachments should be made on this important privilege. They not only protested against the impositions of colleges councils, of prelates and presbyters, but were cautious that their own leaders should not obtain an undue influence over their opinions. They were determined to call no man master on earth. This disposition, though it had a tendency to multiply their debates, will not lessen their character among consistent dissenters.--Besides, it ought to be recollected, that, with respect to many of these churches, we have no memorials, except of their contentions. We know very little of the general baptists during this period, more than is contained in the records of Fenstanton church. In these records, other societies only are mentioned, when any occasion of correspondence between them and this church occurred. These occasions most frequently originated in the disputes which arose in distant churches, which induced them to request the advice and assistance of the ministers and brethren in Huntingdonshire. Hence, we have records of debates in churches of

which we have no other mention. The rise of such churches, their progress, their ministers, their zeal and activity in the cause of Christ, and their numbers, are, most probably, buried in lasting oblivion.--Nothing is preserved but their contentions. Yet these contentions prove, not only their existence, but frequently furnish evidence of their numbers and attachment to what they believed to be the doctrines of inspiration. It was, therefore, thought more prudent to notice these disputes, than wholly to omit the societies in which they happened.

It would not, perhaps, be easy to form an estimate of the number of general baptists in England at the Restoration. When we glance, over the congregations in the different counties which have been mentioned in this chapter, and recollect that we have traces of large societies in other parts of the kingdom, of which we have not been able to obtain any particulars, we naturally conclude they were numerous. Thomas Grantham and his colleagues who had every opportunity of obtaining accurate information, stated them, to king Charles II. not two years afterwards, at upwards of twenty thousand: and it is probable that this account is not at all exaggerated. [Confession of Faith. Crosby, Vol. II. Appendix, No. IV.]

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF THE GENERAL BAPTISTS, FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE REVOLUTION.

SECT. 1.--A concise view of the Laws respecting Religious Affairs made during this period.

Before we pursue the history of the general baptists, it may be useful to present the reader with a brief account of the various statutes respecting religion, which were enacted during the period on which we are entering. This will enable him more easily to understand the subsequent details.

After Oliver Cromwell had governed these realms, under different titles, for nearly ten years, and raised the reputation of the nation to a great height, he died Sept. 3rd. 1658, and left the authority to his son Richard. But the factions, which had been restrained only by the vigilance and firmness of the Protector, broke out, with increased violence, on his death: and his successor, finding it either above his abilities or contrary to his disposition, to struggle with such difficulties, resigned his authority into the hands of parliament, in less than eight months after his father's death. The Commonwealth was, for a short time, restored; but the parliament and army disagreeing, confusion ensued, and violent parties arose. General Monk, who was at the head of an army in Scotland, took advantage of the public ferment, and procured for himself the chief military command, under the title of General of the Armies of England, Scotland and Ireland. Thus vested with power, he marched into England and declared for the calling of a free parliament to settle the government. He recalled all those members of the long parliament who had been forced to abandon their seats during the government of Cromwell, and reinstated them in their places. Thus the Presbyterians regained a short ascendancy; but the army soon obliged

the parliament to dissolve itself and to issue writs for a new election. In the mean time, Monk, who observed that reasonable men of every party began to grow weary of the unsettled state of things and to wish for the restoration of the ancient constitution, artfully fell in with the general feelings of the nation; and, by a course of the most unprincipled hypocrisy, prepared the way for the return of the king.

The new parliament met according to summons, April 25th 1660; and six days afterwards, Gen. Monk delivered a letter from Charles II. to the house, inviting them to return to their duty. This letter was accompanied by a royal declaration, dated from Breda, in which, after offering a full pardon for political offences, his Majesty adds, "WE do also declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom." When this declaration was read in the house of commons, that enlightened statesman, Sir Matthew Hale, moved for a committee to consider of proper means to secure the civil and religious liberties of the subjects, and guarantee the performance of these liberal promises. This reasonable motion, though seconded, was over-ruled by Gen. Monk; and a vote was passed to recall the king without conditions, and to trust to his royal word for the fulfillment of his engagements; a confidence of which all parties had soon sufficient reason to repeat. King Charles landed at Dover, May 26th 1660; and on the 29th entered London in triumph.

The constitution being thus restored to its ancient form, all the regulations adopted during the late innovations were, of course, superseded. Among these, the laws in favour of the rights of conscience became void, and the persecuting statutes resumed their power. Episcopacy, in a few months, was reinstated in its former authority; and the nonconformists found it time to look to their own safety. The independents and baptists, disapproving of national churches, petitioned the king only for a toleration; but the Presbyterians, who had contributed much to the restoration of monarchy, depending on the gratitude and promises of the king, struggled long and vigorously to obtain a place within the pale of the established church. All their efforts were fruitless; and it soon appeared, that the prelates and priests were determined to maintain inviolable their monopoly of profit and power. The justices of the peace, in several counties, presuming on the support of government, began to harass the nonconformists: and it was not long before an event happened, which furnished a pretence for proceeding to greater severities.

During these times of political confusion, an opinion that Christ was about to descend from heaven, and to reign personally over all nations for a thousand years, had gained many advocates. As four great monarchies had already appeared in the world, they called this expected government of the Messiah, the fifth monarchy: and hence they obtained the name of fifty-monarchy-men. Among these, one of the most enthusiastic was Thomas Venner, a cooper. Conceiving that every thing that resembled royalty must be overthrown to make room for king Jesus, he had been very restless during the Protectorate; but, when Charles II. was restored to the throne, he was driven to distraction. He thought, that it was the duty of the subjects of the fifth monarchy to open the way for its commencement. He gained followers, provided them with good arms, and prepared a standard, on which was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, with this motto, "Who shall rouse him up?"-He appointed

them to muster, at the meeting-house, in Swan-alley, Coleman-street, whence they sallied out, to the number of fifty, well armed, on Sunday, Jan. 6th. 1661; after a sermon by Venner, assuring them of the immediate commencement of the kingdom of the saints. They proceeded through the streets, proclaiming king Jesus, till they reached St. Paul's church-yard; when they challenged a person whom they met, and immediately slew him, on his replying that he was for God and the king. This alarmed the city, and the train bands were sent to disperse them; but these were instantly put to flight, by the impetuous zealots, who, after parading the streets for some time, retired to Cane-wood, near Hampstead. Here they were attacked by a party of horse and foot, driven from the wood, and a few made prisoners. The remainder returned to the city; and, after fighting desperately till Venner was wounded and twenty of his followers slain, they were overpowered and seized. They were, in a few days, arraigned and condemned for treason; but shewed no sense of their error, or conviction of having acted improperly. Venner, and one Hodgkins, a captain amongst them, were handed before the meeting-house in Coleman-street, and their quarters exposed on the city gates: and fourteen others suffered a similar punishment in various parts of the metropolis.

This mad attempt furnished a pretence to harass the sectaries: and, on Jan. 10th. his Majesty issued a proclamation, by which the anabaptists, quakers, and fifth-monarchy men, were forbidden to assemble together, under pretence of worshipping God, except in some parochial church or chapel, or in private houses, by the persons there inhabiting; all meetings in any other places being declared unlawful and riotous. Mayors, and other peace officers, were commanded to search for such conventicles, and cause the persons guilty to be bound over to the next sessions. The nonconformists, finding themselves thus held up as dangerous and seditious subjects, and deprived of their rights as christians, thought it proper to vindicate their characters; and publicly to disown any participation in Venner's insurrection, or any cognizance of it. This was done by the independents, baptists, and quakers respectively, in apologies addressed to their rulers and fellow subjects.

But these vindications, satisfactory as they were to impartial judges, did not produce the desired effect. In a few months a bill was passed, which has been too well known, under the title of the Corporation Act. This law enacts, that all persons chosen to offices in corporations, shall take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy-shall swear that it is not lawful, on any pretence whatever, to take up arms against the king-shall renounce the solemn league and covenant-and shall have received the Lord's supper, according to the rites of the church of England, within one year next before such election.

The nonconformists, being thus at once excluded from the magistracy, and rendered incapable of serving their country in lowest civil offices; it was next determined to force them the church. This was the object of the famous Act of Uniformity, which received the royal assent, May 19th, 1662, and took place Aug. 24th following. By this law, every dean, &c. all public professors, in the universities or elsewhere, all parsons, vicars, curates, lecturers, and every schoolmaster keeping any public or private school for the instruction of youth, and every person instructing youth in any private family, are required openly and publicly to declare their unfeigned assent and consent to all and

every thing contained and prescribed in the book of Common prayer--to take the oath of canonical obedience--to abjure the lawfulness of taking arms against the king on any pretence whatsoever--and to be re-ordained, if they had not been episcopally ordained before: The penalties for presuming to act contrary to this statute were; for those who possessed livings or benefices, to be deprived of them; and for school masters and tutors, three months' imprisonment for the first offence; and for every succeeding offence, three months' imprisonment, and the forfeiture of five pounds to his majesty: and for any who presumed to administer the Lord's-supper before he had been episcopally ordained a priest, the forfeiture of one hundred pounds:--The effects of this rigorous measure were felt by all parties. It exposed the dissenting ministers and teachers to fines and imprisonment, if they ventured to worship God after the dictates of their own consciences; and it deprived the church of England of more than two thousand useful, active, and pious ministers, who nobly resigned their places, their incomes, and their prospects, rather than complying with the conditions of this act, wound their consciences.

Charles II. was a man of pleasure, and paid little regard to any religion: but he appears to have been most partial towards the Roman catholics, and was, probably, in secret, a professed papist. His natural disposition inclined him to permit every man to enjoy full liberty of conscience; and, had not his clergy and parliament driven him forwards, his subjects might have been unmolested. But he was profuse, and void of principle; and always ready to sanction any measure for a supply of money, to waste on his pleasures.

In the latter years of his reign he was closely connected with the French court, and, as the parliament laboured to suppress the papists, whom that court particularly favoured, he executed the laws more severely on the dissenters, that he might force them to expose the cause of general toleration, and thus ease the catholics.--Soon after the Act of Uniformity had passed, the silenced ministers applied to the king for relief: and, after the lapse of four months, his majesty issued a proclamation, by which he indulged the dissenters with an exemption from penalties for offences merely religious; dispensed with the laws which imposed them; and promised them to endeavour to procure them more legal relief when the parliament should meet.--The parliament, however, neither approved the indulgence, nor the dispensing power by which it was granted: and, accompanying their expressions of disapprobation of the measure with the grant of a sum of money, the king recalled his indulgence, and ordered the laws to be put in execution.

In the following year, the infamous Conventicle Act was passed. It declares the 35th of Elizabeth to be in full force; which condemns all persons refusing peremptorily to come to church to banishment; and, in case of return, to death, without benefit of clergy. It further enacts, that if any person, above the age of sixteen, shall, after July 1st. 1664, be present at any meeting, under pretence of the exercise of religion, in any other manner than is allowed by the liturgy of the church of England, where there shall be present five or more persons besides the household, shall, for the first offence, suffer three months' imprisonment, or forfeit five pounds; for the second offence, six months' imprisonment, or forfeit ten pounds; and, for the third offence, be banished to some of the American plantations for seven years, or pay a fine of one hundred pounds: and, in case of returning, or making their escape, such persons to be adjudged felons, and suffer death.

This act, also, empowered the sheriffs, justices of the peace, &c. to dissolve, dissipate, and break up all unlawful conventicles, and to take into custody such of the persons as they thought fit. Those who suffered conventicles in their houses or barns were liable to the same forfeitures as those who attended: and married women, taken at conventicles, were to be imprisoned twelve months, unless their husbands paid forty shillings for their release.

This severe law pressed hard upon the hearers; but it was soon followed by another, which tell as heavy upon the ministers. In the midst of the great plague, when eight or ten thousand were dying weekly in London, and the parliament was removed to Oxford, an act was passed, to restrain nonconformists from inhabiting corporations; which prohibited, under severe penalties, any minister from coming within five miles of any city or corporation, unless he took an oath never to oppose the king, nor, at any time, to endeavour any alteration in church or state. It also rendered all persons who refused this oath incapable of teaching any school, or taking any boarders. This act received the royal assent, Oct. 31st. 1665; and has generally been known by the appellation of the Oxford, or Five-mile act.

Notwithstanding these severities, the number of dissenters continued to increase, to the no small mortification of the clergy and high church-party. These were continually teasing his majesty to enforce the laws, while he, desirous of favouring the papists, was often unwilling to proceed to extremities. In 1667, they induced him to publish a proclamation for suppressing conventicles; which, not being executed to the satisfaction of the clergy, was followed, in the next year, by another, which was more effectual in rekindling persecution. The conventicle act which had, at first, been passed only for three years, was, in 1670, revived, with some modifications. The fine, for the first offence, on the hearers, was five shillings; and for the second, ten: on the preacher, for the first offence, twenty pounds; and for the second, forty; and twenty pounds on the owner of the house, barn or yard, in which the conventicle was held. The fines to be levied by distress on the goods of those on whom they were laid; or, in case of poverty, on the goods of any other person that was present: and to be divided, in equal portions, to the king, the poor, and the informer. Any justice of the peace, refusing to do his duty in the execution of this act, was to forfeit five pounds for each refusal: and all the clauses were to be construed most largely and beneficially for the justification and encouragement of all persons employed in the execution of it. If a person fled from one corporation, or even from one county to another, his goods were made seizable wherever they could be found. This law was so cruel, so unjust, and so repugnant to every idea of personal liberty, that many of the magistrates left the bench, and refused to disgrace themselves by enforcing it. Others, however, were soon found less scrupulous; and this iniquitous statute became an instrument of most vexatious oppression.

In the following year, the king ventured to publish another declaration, in favour of dissenters; and to offer them licences for places of public worship; which, for a time, produced some abatement in their sufferings. But the Commons remonstrating against this unconstitutional measure, Charles, being in want of money, and willing to please

them, broke the seal of his declaration with his own hands, recalled his licences, and left the dissenters exposed to all the fury of their enemies.

As many papists had lately been put into offices of trust and profit, both civil and military, and the king openly appeared as their protector, the nation began to entertain serious fears of the introduction of popery. An act, therefore, passed both houses of parliament, requiring all persons, bearing any offices of trust or profit, to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy-to receive the Lord's-supper according to the usage of the church of England-and to renounce the doctrine of transubstantiation, under the penalty of civil disabilities, and a fine of five hundred pounds. The royal assent, extorted through the fear of a civil war, was received, March 5th. 1673.-This statute, known by the title of the Test Act, was acknowledgedly intended to operate against the papists; and it was proposed to distinguish between them and protestant dissenters; but, as this was likely to produce some debate, the dissenters generously waved their claims, and declared themselves willing to lie under the severity of this law for a time, rather than clog a more necessary work with their concerns. Alderman Love, a leading man among them, therefore moved, that, since this was a considerable barrier against popery, the bill might pass without any alteration, and nothing interpose till it was finished. "And then," said the Alderman, "we will try if the parliament will not distinguish us dissenters from popish recusants, by some mark of their favour." But this worthy magistrate sadly over-rated the gratitude of the high church party. This act continues to the present day to exclude protestant dissenters from their rights as citizens; and every attempt to procure relief from restrictions never intended for them, though made in the most respectful manner and seconded by the most enlightened statesmen, has hitherto been ineffectual.

These were the statutes under which dissenters of every denomination groaned, during the whole of this despotic period. In the former part of it, the clergy and the parliament united in oppressing them: and the court, hoping that the papists might be sheltered under their name, endeavoured to favour them. In the latter years of Charles II., and throughout the reign of James II. the parliament, learning to appreciate more justly the character and importance of dissenters, made several attempts to relieve them, which were constantly frustrated by the influence of the court, who were determined that they should enjoy no privilege from which the papists were excluded. In 1680, a bill passed both houses, to exempt his majesty's protestant subjects, dissenting from the church of England, from the penalties imposed upon the papists, by the act of the thirty-fifth of Elizabeth: but when it should have been offered for the royal assent, at the close of the session, it could not be found; the clerk of the crown having withdrawn it from the table, by the king's special order. All the commons, therefore, could do, was to pass two resolutions in their favour. Both these monarchs, however, claimed the power of dispensing with the laws; and sometimes issued their proclamations to indulge dissenters in their religious scruples: by which their suffering were occasionally, for a short period, mitigated. But the nonconformists themselves did not approve of this stretch of prerogative; and it was always condemned by all true friends to the liberties of the nation: these indulgences therefore were received with jealousy and caution, and often were of short duration.*

[* Neal's Puritans. Vol. IV. p. 194, &c.-Some of the cruel laws, mentioned in this section, still continued to disgrace our statute-book; though, since the glorious Revolution, their operation has been, in a good measure, restrained by the Act of Toleration and the spirit of liberality which has spread among all parties. Some attempts having; within these few years, been made to enforce the Conventicle Act, and some magistrates shewing a disposition to inflict its penalties, the attention of the patrons of the rights of conscience was called to the subject; and, in the first section of the New Act of Toleration, which received the royal assent, July 29th. 1812, the Conventicle and the Oxford or Five Mile Acts were formally repealed. May we not hope, that the time is not far distant when all penal statutes respecting religion will be numbered among the things that have been, but are not?]

Through these times of oppression and persecution we are now to trace the general baptists: and, in order to exhibit a distinct view of their affairs, we shall consider them as composing various districts-the churches in Lincolnshire-in the counties adjoining-in London and Kent-and in the southern counties.

SECT. 2.-The proceedings of the General Baptists in Lincolnshire, from the Restoration to Mr. Grantham's first imprisonment.

We have seen, in the last chapter, that the general baptists in Lincolnshire were numerous and zealous: and that, during the protectorate, their success exposed them to obloquy and interruption. Immediately on the restoration, their enemies, presuming on the countenance of the court, broke out into hostility. The baptists were forbidden to assembly for the worship of God, without giving security for their good behaviour. In the simplicity of their hearts they complied, never imagining that peaceably attending to their religious duties would be construed into bad behaviour. Their enemies, however, esteemed this the height of their offending, and proceeded to still more violent outrages.- The baptists, finding no redress upon applying to the magistrates of the county, resolved to appeal to the king. Accordingly, they drew up a narrative of their sufferings, in an address to his majesty; which, by the interest of an honourable member of parliament, their messengers obtained an opportunity of delivering into the hands of Charles II. on July 26th. 1660. These messengers were, Mr. Thomas Grantham and Mr. Joseph Wright: the former, though scarcely twenty-six years of age, was the principal support of the general baptist cause in the South Marsh of Lincolnshire; and the latter a messenger of the church of Westby, in the same county. At the same time, these messengers, presented to the king a brief Confession of Faith, which had been composed in the preceding spring. We shall have occasion to notice this Confession in a subsequent chapter: and shall here insert an extract from the Address, as containing an affecting relation of their oppressions, in their own words. It runs thus:

“May it please your Majesty,

“Being commanded thereto by the Lord, we have met often together, to acquaint each other what God hath done, doth daily, and will do for our souls: and what, therefore, we ought to do towards him, each other, and all men.—From which assemblings, O king! we

have been discharged by some in magisterial capacity in these parts; although therein we bless God none hath ever found us with multitude or tumult. But being taught of God to obey him in the things by him commanded, rather than man, though in the place of magistracy, when commanding things contrary; we therefore durst not receive that discharge. Wherefore some of us have been silence from making mention of the name of the Lord, as formerly, by being entangled in bonds, pretendedly imposed upon us for this good behaviour. To which, in our innocency, we readily yielded; being bound to the good behaviour in conscience, we feared not to be bound thereto by law. But such is the sad estate of this generation, that they call good evil, and evil good; with sorrow we speak it; taking their advantage against us, in our serving the Lord. Upon account of the condition of these obligations, accounting us, O king! peacebreakers, when, in the sincerity of our hearts and innocency of our souls, we peaceably meet to worship our God: in his fear we affirm it. Since thus entangled, O king! we have been much abused as we pass in the streets, and as we sit in our houses; being threatened to be hanged, if but heard praying to the Lord in our families, and disturbed in our so waiting upon God by uncivil beating at our doors, and sounding of horns; yea, we have been stoned, when going to our meetings; the windows of the place where we have been met struck down with stones; yea, taken as evil-doers, and imprisoned when peaceably met together to worship the Most High, in the use of his most precious ordinances. We have, O king! spread these things before them in authority in these parts, but can have no redress from them: but the rage of our adversaries hath been augmented, by hearing us abused by some of them in open court who sat on the bench of justice, under the odious terms of knavish, juggling, impudent, and fanatic fellows, &c. And, as if all this were too little, they have, to fill up their measure, very lately, indicted many of us at the sessions: and intend, as we are informed, to impose on us the penalty of twenty pounds per month for not coming to hear such men as they provide for us; of whose principles and practices, we could give a most sad and doleful, yet, O king! a most true relation,” &c.

Signed by,

John Wats, William Burton, William Dawson, John Dawson, Thos. Harrison, Peter Betts, William Roweth, R. Wilkinson, James Dyon, R. Richardson, Roger Fawn, W. Hunter, Joseph Brittain, Robert Maultby, T. Ratelyffe, George Pay, M. Brumby, John Gree, Luke Robinson, W. Harker, Rob. Fletcher, William Hill, Edward Wood, Thomas Croft, T. Maxworth, Thomas Clay, R. Grantham, Charles Cock, John Rutter, James Carden, Richard Clark, Robert Pagson, Robert Shalder, Joseph Wright, T. Grantham.

To this address his majesty, with his usual complaisance, replied, that it was not his mind, that any of his good subjects, who lived peaceably, should suffer any trouble on account of their religious opinions; promised that he would have special care over them, that none should in future molest them; and, while they were present, ordered a member of parliament to go to the Chancellor and Secretary, and have the proper measures taken for their security, which the member promised should be done. [Jessey's *Lord's Loud Call to England*, 1660. p. 15.]

What effect this application produced, or in what manner these royal promises were kept, we are not informed. Probably the fury of their adversaries might, for a little time, be

restrained. But the rash insurrection of Venner and his associates, which followed, in a few months, supposed a plausible pretence for breaking all measures with the sectaries: and the baptists became the objects of peculiar odium. The old tales of the Munster enthusiasts were revived: and all anabaptists, as they were styled, were represented as the genuine successors, in spirit as well as name, of John of Leyden. Nor were these injurious suspicions confined to the unthinking mob; they were sanctioned by the highest authority. In less than four days after this insurrection, the king issued a proclamation, forbidding all fifth-monarchy-men, quakers, and anabaptists to meet, under pretence of religious worship; plainly insinuating that particular danger was to be dreaded from their machinations.

To clear themselves from these aspersions, the Lincolnshire general baptists, in conjunction with their brethren in other parts of the kingdom, published a spirited defence of themselves, entitled, "The humble Apology of some commonly called Anabaptists, in behalf of themselves and others of the same judgment; with their Protestation against the late wicked, most horrid, and treasonable insurrection and rebellion, acted in the City of London; together with an Apology formerly addressed to the king's most excellent Majesty." It begins thus: "We should be stupid and senseless, if we did not resent those black obloquies and reproaches, cast upon those of our profession and practice in the point of baptism, by occasion of the late most horrid treason and rebellion in this city of London. We most sadly see and feel, that among many it is become enough to render any man criminal to be called an anabaptist; or at least a ground sufficient to question his loyalty and fidelity to the king's majesty.

We may not, therefore, be so negligent of our duty unto God, in respect of our professions, or unto ourselves and families, as silently to suffer our names and profession to be buried under such causeless infamy: neither may we be so much wanting in our duty to our king, as by such silence to offer his majesty just occasion of being jealous of our loyalty and obedience, and to leave him without all possible security of our humble subjection and fidelity." The apologists then after adverting to the tumults at Munster, and shewing, in a forcible manner, the absurdity of assuming those excesses as grounds of suspicion against the English baptists, who avow the utmost detestation of their seditious principles, proceed to clear themselves of any participation in Venner's enterprize--by declaring that all who were concerned in that made attempt, except one, were assertors of infant baptism, and professed enemies of the baptist--by appealing to the readiness with which many of the baptists ventured their lives in opposing those insurgents--and by a solemn protestation of their entire ignorance of the whole design. On these grounds, they challenge the confidence and good opinion of their governors and fellow-subjects; appeal to their good sense whether there is any connection between believers' baptism and rebellion; and conclude thus "And, therefore, we humbly hope that the omnipotent Power of heaven and earth will so dispose his majesty and his people's hearts, that we may worship God in peace and freedom, according to the faith we have received, living a peaceable and quiet life in all godliness and honesty." In a postscript, they refer, as an evidence, that these are their real sentiments, and not assumed in consequence of the bad success of the late attempts to the Petition and Confession of Faith, presented by them to the king a few months before.*

[* Grantham's *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book III. p. 7.--The Signatures subscribed to this Apology, in Grantham's *Christianismus Primitivus*, are those of the baptist ministers in or near London, both general and particular; but there is strong internal evidence, that it is the production of the general baptists, and probably of the same party as a signed the Confession just mentioned. In one passage, adverting to the injustice of supposing that because they agreed with the Munster insurge in the article of believers' baptism, they therefore agreed with them in their political errors, they say: "It would not be holden just to aver every protestant to believe consubstantiation, or absolute predestination and reprobation, because Luther was zealous in the one and Calvin in the other; why therefore should the errors and impieties of others be imputed to us, whilst we earnestly contend against them?" Now it is hardly to be supposed that the particular baptists would have introduced their distinguishing tenets in such company. But the reference to "the apology of our ancient and constant principles presented, with our humble petition, to the king's most excellent majesty some months since, in the year 1660," seems to decide the point. We have no information that the particular baptists presented and petition or apology, at that time; but we have seen that the general baptists presented both, on the 26th of the preceding July, about five months previous to Venne's insurrection. Possibly the signatures to this apology have, by some accident, been transferred from that which immediately follows it, both in Grantham and Crosby; which was published, at the same time, and on the same occasion, by the "baptists in and about the city of London," and therefore might be supposed to have the signatures here affixed. Gratham's *Christ. Prim.* Book III. p. 10. Crosby, Vol. II. p. 42.]

But the Lincolnshire general baptists did not content themselves with uniting in this public apology. They made a separate application to the throne, and presented a petition, which was published soon after, under the title of "The second humble Address of those who are called Anabaptists, in the county of Lincoln, presented to his majesty Charles II." It was as follows:

"May it please your Majesty,

Once more to permit your distressed yet faithful subjects to spread their innocence and sorrow of heart before you. It seems it must needs be that offences do or shall come; but the woe is deservedly their portion by whom the offence cometh. When we read your letter from Breda, and the revival thereof in your declaration for ecclesiastical affairs, and your princely promises tous, when, by your clemency, permitted to be present with yourself: O king! when we remember these things, we are ready to say, (not, why was the king's proclamation so hasty? but) why was the extension thereof so large? Shall the righteous suffer with the wicked? God forbid. Must your peaceable subjects be judge riotous; whilst many ones (such as swearers and drunkards) are freed from that judgment? The Lord will not accompany such proceedings.

Our humble requests, therefore, from these premises are, that there may be a righteous distinction in the administration of government; lest the cries of the innocent, and their ruined families, come up before the Lord: whilst your prisons are filled with such as

whose prayers have come up to a throne of grace on your majesty's behalf: and can approve their hearts to the Lord in respect of loyalty and good fidelity to your majesty, and the civil government of this nation under your hands," &c. [*Kennett's Historical Register and Chronicle, p. 361.]

To strengthen this remonstrance, as paper delivered, Jan. 23d. 1661, to some Lord's of the privy council, to be presented to his majesty, entitled "The Character of an Anabaptist." It was evidently written by a friend, in order to soften the rancour that existed against that ----. It begins with asserting, that, "Anabaptist is so called, for being baptized according to the scriptures, and as the Rubric and book of Common-prayer commands and instructs." From the opening, we may suppose that it was an animated and shewd performance: but we have only seen this introduction.

It appears that these means failed of the desired effects: the baptists still continued to be the objects of suspicion and persecution; yet they did not despond. Encouraged, probably, by the gracious manner in which their messengers had been received at court, they resolved to make another attempt. On February 23, 1661, they waited on his majesty, with "The third Address of those persons known by the name of Anabaptists, in the county of Lincoln." In order to remove every reasonable ground of jealousy, the heads of several congregations proposed, in this address, to give security in behalf of the rest, for the support and protection both of his majesty's person and government. This was subscribed by Thomas Grantham; Valent. James, Dan. Cheesman, John Kelsay, Thomas Muckworth, Richard Crawforth, John Lupton, and John Thrope. In answer to this proposal, the king assured them, with great seriousness, that he was very well satisfied concerning the Lincolnshire petitioners, that they were a peaceable people, and good subjects; and that he would take it into his princely care to preserve such. And the lord chancellor, who was present, said that an instrument was drawing up for that purpose. [Ibid. 383.]

But these specious promises were illusory: and the effect, if any was produced, was very partial, local and transient. Persecution still continued to oppress nonconformists of every denomination. The magistrates exerted themselves, even beyond the laws, cruel as they were; and thousands, on account of their religion only, were stripped of their possessions, and thrown into prison; or obliged to flee from their habitations, and forsake their callings and families. Every thing seemed hastening to confusion; and protestant government shewed a strong disposition to adopt the intolerant principles of the papists. In this time of public ferment, some of the principal general baptist ministers in Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, &c., who had witnessed their attachment to the truth by bonds and sufferings, published a well-timed and excellent Address to the king, parliament, and people. This was not designed to vindicate their own peculiar, tenets, but to oppose the principle on which all public persecution is built--the right of the magistrate to impose any thing in the worship or service of God. The title is, "Sion's Groans for her distressed: or, sober endeavours to prevent innocent blood," &c. It was signed by Thomas Monk, Joseph Wright, George Hammon, William Jeffery, Francis Stanley, William Reynolds, and Francis Smith; and dated March 8th, 1662. They express their views in this

publication, and state their own sentiments so explicitly in the following passage, that we are pleased with its insertion.

"Last, therefore, those unchristian principles of persecution for conscience, which troubleth the world should take root in this nation, to the stirring up of men's minds to shed the blood of the innocent, the guilt whereof is sufficient to sink the most flourishing kingdom into an ocean of misery and calamity; we have here with some arguments, which we humbly offer to all men, to prove how contrary to the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and to good reason it is, for any magistrate, by outward force, to impose any thing in the worship of God, on the consciences of those whom they govern: but that liberty ought to be given to all such as disturb not the civil peace, though of different persuasions in religious matters. In which discourse, we neither desire nor design to diminish any of that power which God hath given to the king's majesty that now reigneth: whom we own to be chief magistrate and governor of these nations, over all persons, as well ecclesiastical as temporal. And to all his commands, that do not oppose the scriptures of truth shall we yield active obedience, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. And if any thing otherwise shall be required, we shall be passive, and suffer what may be inflicted on us for our consciences. For, whatever hath been suggested by evil men, yet that magistracy and government is an ordinance of God, hath been frequently asserted in our discourses and writings, and is by us believed as fully as the apostle Paul in the thirteenth chapter to the Romans hath taught. And all that we desire, which is dearer to us than our lives, is, that our spirits and consciences may be left free to serve the Eternal God: which ought to be granted us, seeing, as the same apostle saith, in these cases, 'We shall every one of us give an account of himself to God'."

Mr. Crosby, has preserved the whole of this excellent piece; but our limits will only permit us to give a very concise summary of its arguments. The power to impose any thing in the worship or service of, God cannot, they say, belong to the magistrate, as such, because: 1. If all have it: and, therefore, the subjects must be papists, Turks, &c. in different countries. 2. No such power is given by Christ, in the New Testament. 3. The apostles refused to obey their rulers in things pertaining to religion. 4. The directions in scripture, which enjoin obedience to magistrates, referred to heathen powers. 5. magistrates had this power, all religion would consist in obeying them, and persecution must cease. 6. The wise Gallio thought otherwise, Acts 18:12.--Nor has the magistrate this power as a christian: because 1. The Lord Jesus would never exercise it. 2. The apostles disclaimed it. 3. The parable of the wheat and tares forbids it. 4. Magistrates, both civil and ecclesiastical, are fallible, and have erred. 5. It is contrary to our Saviour's golden rule, of doing to others as we would they should do to us.--After treating each of these topics with perspicuity and spirit, they reply at large to the objections, that the kings of Israel punished religious offences; and that it is inconsistent with the safety of the state to allow various modes of religious worship. The authors conclude with a pertinent extract from bishop Taylor's Liberty of prophesying; and a request that they might have the privilege of a public dispute, between themselves and the members of the establishment, in the presence of the king. [Crosby, Vol. II. p. 97-144.] This piece certainly does great credit to the abilities, principles, and tempers of the good men by

whom it was published. Happy would it have been for the nation, if the rational sentiments which it recommends had been more universally respected.

Unhappily these sentiments did not prevail. Persecution, in all its various forms, visited the conscientious nonconformists. The enemies of all religion, incited by the severity of the laws, took the opportunity to vex and spoil their innocent neighbours. Informers, of the most abandoned characters, were openly encouraged by the magistrates, to hunt for the liberties and property of all who ventured to worship God after the dictates of their own consciences, though in the most private and inoffensive manner. Nor were there wanting men of influence, who countenanced these wretches by their money and support; and sometimes descended so low as to join them in their ignominious vocation. In Lincolnshire the general baptists endured their full share of these oppressions. One Radley, a gentleman of considerable property in that county, distinguished himself by his enmity against the baptists. Under the authority of the Act of Uniformity, he went with an armed force to their meeting, with a design to apprehend them: but the soldiers, struck with their innocent deportment, to the great mortification of their leader, refused to molest them. This Radley, after doing all the mischief in his power to his pious neighbours, became a bankrupt, and died of the plague in London. His widow was reduced to great poverty, and his children thrown on the parish for support. Some of them were relieved by those very baptists whom their father had so rancourously persecuted. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 79.]

But the innocency of the baptists did not long protest them. Soon after Radley's abortive attempt, a party of soldiers entered their meeting-house at Boston, during public worship, and seized several of the congregation. After some time, they dismissed all, except Mr. Grantham and two others. These they dragged to a public house, and lodged them there all night: where their pious ears were sorely vexed, by the profane and impious language of their guards. In the morning they were conveyed to Lincoln, and lodged in the common jail. In order to prejudice the people against them, it was confidently reported that they were papists; and several clergymen who visited them affirmed, to Mr. Grantham's face, that he was a jesuit in disguise. Mr. Grantham effectually refuted this calumny, by publishing, under the title of "The Baptist against the Papist," a dispute which he had maintained with a Roman catholic. Having thus removed the slander, he turned his pen against the slanderers, and wrote a small piece, in verse, which he called "The Prisoner against the Prelate: or, a Dialogue between the Common Gaol and Cathedral of Lincoln: wherein the true Faith and Church of Christ are briefly discovered and vindicated, by the Authority of Scripture, Suffrages of Antiquity, Concessions and Confessions of the chief Opposers of the same church and Faith. Written by a Prisoner of the baptized churches in Lincolnshire." Though this Dialogue can claim little merit as a poem, yet it attacks the arguments which are generally urged in defence of the established church, with great force and reasoning; and, in some instances, with a shrewdness and sprightliness that prove the equanimity which the pious author enjoyed, even in his bonds. It contains severe strictures on the pomp, carnality, and errors of the churches and the pride, cruelty, avarice, and immorality of her priests. In the course of the work is introduced a versification of the Confession of Faith presented to the king, with the testimony of scripture and antiquity subjoined to each article.*

[* As a specimen of the style of this poem, we insert the conclusion of the Dialogue. The scene is laid in the Cathedral, which kindly admonishes the Jail to pray against delusion.
JAIL.

“That is my pray’r: but I’ll not pray with thee,
Till in the truth we shall united be:
Which we may be, if we ourselves deny,
And learn of God in due humility:
Which when thou dost in truth, 'tis in my mind,
Not here, but in the Jail, I thee shall find.

CATHEDRAL.

What? Is the Jail and truth so near united?
This dreadful doctrine will make men affrighted.
And few will find the truth; for if’t be so,
There few to seek the truth to jail will go.
Now fare thee well: keep that place as thy treasure.
And I’ll keep this, and here enjoy my pleasure.

JAIL.

Adieu, Cathedral: go take thy fill
Or organ music. And, since 'tis God's will,
I'll back to that unpleasant cell of mine;
Where some truth's known, which else would never shine
In its bright splendour: also there our God
Doth shew himself a Father by his rod.”]

These publications, in connection with the peaceful and edifying behaviour of Mr. Grantham and his friends, turned the popular disapprobation against the clergy, who had used every method to deprive them of their liberty and good name. When the people beheld the prisoners employed chiefly in prayer and praise of God, and holy conversation with each other. They began to esteem their enemies self-interested persecutors of those who were better than themselves. Yet their imprisonments was protracted for a tedious period; and two assizes must have passed, before they were permitted to plead in court. At length, in the spring of 1663, they were brought to the bar; and no accuser appearing, were discharged; and returned to their joyful friends, after spending fifteen months in close confinement.*

[* Crosby, Vol. II. p. 149, &c. Grantham’s *Christ. Prim. Book IV. pref. Prisoner against the Prelate*, passim. Mr. Crosby, who is sometimes very loose in his statements, informs us, that about the year 1662, Mr. Grantham was apprehended and carried before a magistrate, who bound him over to the assizes; and that many of the Lincolnshire baptists were sorely harassed, by the levies of twenty pounds per month, for absenting themselves from the established church. The latter assertion is highly probable; but the former must, if the account in the text be accurate, be a mistake, as Mr. Grantham was in Lincoln jail all the year 1662. These circumstances might apply to some other of the persecutions which this good man endured.—The same author goes on to state, that, in consequence of these troubles, the Lincolnshire baptists sent Messrs. Grantham and Wright again to

court, with a Petition for indulgence, and the Confession of Faith formerly presented: and that the king received them courteously, and promised them redress. “And accordingly,” adds the same author, “he set forth his declaration in their favour, the 26th of December following; and they who had been indicted for religion were, at the next sessions or assizes, acquitted in open court, to the shame and vexation of their enemies, who were upon the bench.” Here, again, there must be an error: since Mr. Grantham being, as already observed, in prison at the time, could not present the petition. It is not unlikely that this refers to one of the addresses presented in 1661: and Mr. Neal gives a very different and more probable account of the intention of the court in the Proclamation of December 26th. 1662. See Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 79, 80. Neal. Vol. IV. pp. 385-389.]

SECT. 3.—The transactions of the Lincolnshire General Baptists, continued to the Revolution.

In 1664, the Conventicle Act gave new spirits to the enemies of the nonconformists. Under the sanction of this law, soldiers were sent into different parts of the country, to disarm the dissenters, and break up their meetings. Some troops, employed on this business in Lincolnshire, under the pretence of searching for arms, rifled the houses of the general baptists; and, though they found no arms, pillaged their goods. They apprehended Mr. Grantham and several others, and made them run by the side of their horses, from one town to another, refusing to inform them whither they intended to take them, or to what punishment they were destined. When night overtook them they put up at an inn, and confined their prisoners in a very incommodious room; tying them up so that they could take no rest. The soldiers spent the night in an adjoining room; and, by their drunkenness and impiety, added much to the grief of these godly ministers. In the morning they took them to Louth, and secured them in the house of correction. After some time, they were brought before the magistrates, who, instead of enquiring into the charges from their accusers, endeavoured, by ensnaring questions, to lead them to criminate themselves. Finding this did not succeed, they tendered them the oaths, and demanded whether they would conform to the establishment. This the prisoners explicitly and resolutely refused to do. For which Mr. Grantham, Mr. John Gree, and Mr. John Green were sent to the common jail. After they had been confined several months, the assizes commenced; but their enemies prevented their cause from being heard. They were, at length, brought before the justices at the quarter sessions: but those magistrates refusing to recognize them, or to hear their cause, the sheriff said that, as he had produced them in court, he had discharged his duty; and set them at liberty. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 81.]

The persecutors were still desirous of avenging themselves on the baptists: and, esteeming Mr. Grantham their chief support, they bent all their malice against him. Soon after he was set at liberty, an action was brought against him for damages of one hundred pounds, for beating and ill-treating a woman whom he had baptized: but, to the confusion of his adversaries, the cause was thrown out of court, at the next assizes, as an ungrounded and malicious prosecution. [Ubi supra.]

So great was the rancour of the people against the baptists at this time, that they were frequently denied the benefit of common burying places; though, as Mr. Grantham observes, they paid all the rates for fencing them and keeping them in order. Sometimes they carried their enmity to still greater insults. In the year 1666, Robert Shalder, who was a person of some eminence among the Lincolnshire general baptists, and signed the first address presented to the king, died at Croft, in that county. He had been, for a long time, a prisoner for conscience' sake, and obtained his liberty only a little before his death. His friends buried him among his ancestors, in the parish burying-ground : but, on the same day, some of the inhabitants of Croft opened his grave, took out the body, and dragged it on a sledge to his own gate, where they left it exposed, on the ground. It appears that his friends re-interred his remains in some private place, to avoid a repetition of such inhuman treatment. The two chief actors in this disgraceful business did not long survive it. One died suddenly; and the other languished for some time, under a painful disease, greatly tormented by a guilty conscience. [Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book III. chap. 10. Crosby, II. 239.]

The general baptists in Lincolnshire, though, so violently opposed, not only maintained their ground, but increased in numbers and order. In 1666, Mr. Grantham was ordained to the office of a messenger. "I was," says he, "elected, by the consent of many congregations, and ordained to the office of a messenger by those who were in the same office before me. The place where I was ordained was in my own mansion or dwelling house, the place where the church usually met." "I was chosen," says he, in another place, "by the consent of many churches, to take a larger trust: and ordained messenger, to oversee the churches in divers places that had need of help." [Dispute with Connould, pp. 5 and 100.] From these statements, it is evident that the general baptist cause had spread much, and was conducted with zeal and prudence.

We have few particulars of these professors for several years. There can be no doubt, but they continued to pursue their great work with steadiness and spirit; and had their full portion of the persecutions which were then the lot of all dissenters. But neither present sufferings, nor the fear of future afflictions, deterred them from standing boldly forth in the defence of the truth when they considered the honour of religion made it necessary.

Mr. Robert Wright, most probably the same person whom we have already had occasion to mention, who had been a baptist preacher, was, before this time, excluded from their communion for irregular conduct. After spending his estate in dissolute pleasures, he applied to the bishop of Lincoln for a living in the church; promising to renounce the principles of the baptists, and to preach against them. The bishop accepted his terms, and gave him a place. To prove the sincerity of his apostacy, Mr. Wright, in 1670, delivered, in the city of Lincoln, some violent discourses in defence of infant sprinkling; in which he cast some severe reflections upon the tenets and practice of his former associates. The members of the establishment were highly elated on this occasion, and began to suppose that the cause of believers' baptism would soon be ruined. To vindicate themselves, and check the insolence of their adversaries, Mr. Grantham drew up a challenge to the aforesaid Mr. Wright, inviting him to a friendly public conference, in the same place where he had attacked the baptists; promising him, that, on due notice, he should "find

some, if God permitted, to maintain the doctrine and baptism of repentance to be from heaven; and the sprinkling and crossing of infants to be man's tradition." Four copies of this challenge were signed by Mr. Grantham; and, during the time of the assizes, posted up in the most conspicuous places in that city. Two of them were soon taken down; and, as it was supposed, carried to the bishop and the judge. The other two remained the greatest part of the day, and were read by numbers. At length they were taken down by the clergy, who threatened that the writer should answer for them before the council. Mr. Wright, however, did not find it convenient to accept the challenge: and the blusterings of the clergy ended in an angry letter, sent by the bishop's chaplain to the baptists, to which Mr. Grantham returned a spirited answer. This closed the business: neither the old advocates for infant sprinkling, nor their recent convert choosing to enter the lists in its defence: [Crosby, Vol. II. p. 242] But it is not improbable that one of the ten imprisonments, endured by Mr. Grantham, was either occasioned or hastened by his resolute conduct on this occasion.

In the year 1670, died John Lupton, a messenger of the general baptists in Lincolnshire. The first notice we have of him is in 1653; when he was joined with Joseph Wright, in a visit to the churches in Huntingdonshire. We find him, also, with the same companion, in 1655, at Wisbeach. In 1657 he appears to have been settled at Coningsby or Tattershall; and, in 1661, as one of the heads of the congregation, he signed the third Address of the Lincolnshire baptists to the king. He evidently was a person of some influence in the former part of his ministry; but appears to have declined in his circumstances towards the end of his life. He was a pious man; and preserved the esteem of his brethren in the ministry to the last.*

[*Of this, the following epitaph on him, preserved in Coningsby Church-book, and composed by T.G. (most probably Thomas Grantham) affords pleasing evidence.
"Thou wast both call'd and fitted for thy place,
By Him who is the Donor of all grace.
Equall'd by few, and blest with great success:
Till fortune's snares thy heav'n-born soul did press.
Thy death was thy release: Heav'n so decreed,
Thy friends in thee man's various state may read." C.C.B. p. 17.]

Though the baptists were heavily oppressed by outward trials, yet they were too ready to devour one another. About this time, the controversy respecting the laying on of hands was carried on among them with great zeal. Though the intervention of some moderate men, considerable progress had been made towards a friendly agreement: and hopes were entertained, that "brotherly concord, peace, and truth, would possess the room of all their divisions in affection, judgment, and practice, especially on this point." But these hopes were disappointed, through the intemperate heat of some of the opposers of the practice; more particularly by a publication, entitled, "A Search of Schism," by a number of ministers who opposed the practice; which contained some very severe reflections on the churches which adopted it. This produced several replies. Among others, Mr. Grantham, who had too great a reverence for the testimony of God to allow him to esteem any thing indifferent which he found in the oracles of truth,* published a small treatise, in 1671,

which he dedicated to the church of Christ in London, and the General Assembly, under the title of “A Sigh for Peace: or, the Cause of Division discovered.” In this work he vindicates the practice of laying on of hands, and the propriety of those who practise it declining to join in communion at the Lord’s table with those who oppose it. He also subjoined a defence of the messenger’s office, which, it appears, some of the churches, at that early period, began to dislike. This work led to an interview between the author and Mr. Jer. Ives, a general baptist minister in London; who, it seems, adopted the opposite side of the controversy: when Mr. Ives, if we credit Mr. Crosby, finding himself hard pressed by his antagonist, broke off the conference in a very amicable manner. [Grantham’s *Sigh for Peace*. Crosby, Vol. II. p. 278.]

[* “There is no readier way to destroy any truth, than to let it pass for a thing indifferent.” (Grantham’s *Sigh for Peace*, p. 119).]

When Charles II. issued his proclamation in favour of dissenters, March 15, 1672. Mr. Grantham, accompanied by another messenger, was deputed, by the Lincolnshire general baptists, to wait upon his majesty, with an address of thanks for his indulgence. But, after expressing their gratitude for what he had done, these honest subjects seized that opportunity of instructing their monarch in what respects even his indulgence infringed that liberty to which as christians they esteemed themselves to be entitled. They besought him to permit them to pray and preach at such times and in such places as they should think, under the guidance of scripture, most for the edification of the church, without any restraint from government—declared their intention of continuing to act in this manner till they obtained his permission—and assured him that no less liberty than the scriptures warrant it to claim would be acceptable to the church of God. In conclusion [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 83], they thanked his majesty for his lenity; and prayed, that “God would magnify grace in his princely soul; that whilst he reigned here on earth he might excel in all true honour; and, after this life, enjoy a crown of immortality and a throne of glory in heaven.”

In less than a year, however, all these prospects of liberty vanished: for, March 8th. 1673, his majesty withdrew his protection from the dissenters. It is highly probable, that, on this change, the plain remonstrance of these honest men would be recollected to their disadvantage. Certain it is, that they suffered severely by the various modes of persecution which continued to rage, with short intermissions, till the Revolution. Of their heavy sufferings they have left a simple, but affecting account, in a narrative drawn up by Mr. Grantham, probably about 1685,* entitled “The Baptists’ complaint against the persecution Priests,” &c. [* They speak of Cromwell being Lord Protector above thirty years before they made this complaint.] This Complaint was never published; but a manuscript copy of it fell into Mr. Crosby’s hand, and he has preserved large extracts from it. After acknowledging the wroth of some of the clergy of the established church, they complain of the persecuting spirit of others, who sought their utter ruin; and incited magistrates to persecute them, notwithstanding they had faithfully endeavoured to obtain peace and brotherly kindness with the ministers of the church of England, not only by their friendly deportment, but also by several public overtures. They then quoted Job and the Psalmist as precedents for complaining under severe oppressions, and proceed thus:

“Now our case being, as we believe, much like the case of these good men, we do also make our just complaint; that we live among those, who, by their place, should be men of peace and meekness, but are far otherwise; so haughty, a man can scarce tell how to speak to them: and when we speak of truth and peace, they are for war: bitterly calling us damned fanatics and heretics, even in their pulpits: only because we dissent from them in some things, which the most learned confess have neither precept nor precedent in the word of God.

We have borne the unkind usage of many of our countrymen, and of persecuting priests in particular, for more than thirty years. For, in the time of Cromwell’s usurpation, they did then hale us before the judgment-seats, because we could not worship God after the will of their Lord Protector; for so they styled him in their articles against us. And we had then our goods taken away, and never restored to this day.

And, lest the reader should suppose we provoked these men, by withholding their dues; let him know, that we gave them their demands as well as any; and, perhaps, from better principles than some others: for we consider, that when we either hire or purchase land, the tenths are excepted, and so not ours. But yet, it is also to be considered, that they were not given to maintain men in drunkenness, lording, persecuting, and ruining such as fear God, merely because they dissent from them in the things aforesaid. Yet thus goes the business in these days; by which unreasonable practices, they outdo the false prophets which were of old: for they prepared war against those that did not put into their mouths; but these devour those that labour to maintain them.

Nor shall we, as yet, make a particular rehearsal of the sufferings of the baptized believers in this nation; having learned, with Jerome, to say, ‘If at any time, for the commandments of God and the verity of faith, the priests, or false prophets, or foolish people be angry with us, let us not esteem or make any account of it; but let us keep the commandments of God: not thinking on our troubles which are present, but beholding the goodness to come.’ Let it suffice, then, that we briefly touch or reflect upon the things which have come upon us, in one county only, in Lincolnshire, though we be but few in number, and generally poor men: because there may be a more general account of these things transmitted to posterity. And,

1. We have sustained not less than the imprisonment of one hundred persons; some by the writ de capicado----, others by the writ qui tam----; some for hearing, others for preaching the word of God: not any man amongst us being any ways concerned in plotting, or any misdemeanour against our lord the king: for whom we give thanks to God, with prayer that he may have a long and happy reign over us.

2. We have borne the trial of no less than three hundred levies: some, for sixty, forty, twenty, and ten pounds; some, for two-pence per week; which, by the often repetition of them, have weakened many poor men, and caused them to remove their habitations.

3. Indictments at the assizes and sessions, upon the statute of two-pence per week and twenty pounds per month, we have had the trial of not less than a thousand: which has been no small charge to those who have been prosecuted there.

4. Presentments and excommunications in the commissary courts, we have had some hundreds, to the great prejudice as well as charge of many of us: with many other particular vexations from private persons, not here to be inserted. And yet, we trust, we may humbly use the words of the Psalmist: ‘All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee; neither have we dealt deceitfully in thy covenant.’ But these things have contributed, in general, to our more full assurance, that the truth is with us, in the things wherein we dissent from those who persecute us. And, in this holy confidence, we hope to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, if our God shall call us to it. For we believe and are sure, to persecute is no mark of the true church; but to suffer persecution is so: and that, that religion is not worth professing in time of peace, which is not worth owning in the time of the greatest trouble.”

Having given this artless detail of their sufferings, they enter their protest against the doctrine of passive obedience; and the opinion that what religion soever is established by the governors of a nation is the true worship of God in their dominions. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 63-90.]

The pious, active, and zealous Thomas Grantham was, throughout this trying season, a principal support of the general baptist interest in these parts. On all occasions he proved himself the undaunted champion of what he esteemed to be the cause of God and truth. No prospect of personal advantage could allure him to desert its interest; nor could the apprehension of the greatest danger or less deter him from being the public advocate. During these two reigns, he was ten times thrown into prison; and was often continued for many successive months. He suffered the loss of friends and substance; yet he did not relax in his labours. In this interval, we shall find him, as we proceed, preaching the gospel, founding churches, nursing them up to maturity; and setting in order the things that were wanting, in London, at Norwich, at Lynn Regis, at Warboys, at Warwick, and various other distant places: but it was with the baptized churches in Lincolnshire that he was most closely connected.

Though thus actively employed in travelling, preaching, and watching over the churches; he was yet able to write much: and his works had the same object with all his other labours. He preached, he travelled, he suffered, and he wrote, to advance the cause of genuine christianity.—With this view, in 1678, he published “Christianismus Primitivus: or, the ancient Christian Religion, in its nature, certainty, excellency and beauty, (internal and external) particularly considered, asserted, and vindicated; from the many abuses which have invaded that sacred profession, by human innovation, or pretended religion,” &c.*

[* As this Volume is becoming scarce, the following concise analysis of its contents will, it is presumed, be acceptable.—The Introduction defends the divine authority of the scriptures.—Book I. treats of the certainty and excellency of the christian religion.—

Book II. exhibits the internal and external parts of christianity; including a detailed explanation and defence of the various doctrines, duties and precepts of the christian religion as they regard faith, practice or experience.—Book III. resolves divers cases of conscience: in which are discussed the duties incumbent on the christian from his connections with society, both civil and religious; especially the necessity and propriety of obedience to civil government.—Book IV. is a republication of six small Treatises which had been formerly published, by the same author, in defence of christianity against human innovations and pretended revelations: these are, The Baptist against the Papist; 2. The Baptist against the Quaker. 3. The Paedobaptists' Apology for the Baptized churches. 4. The Querist examined: or Fifty Anti-queries seriously propounded to the Presbyterians. 5. The Fourth Principle of Christ's Doctrine (Imposition of hands) vindicated; with a defence of the Messenger's office. 6. Gospel Separation considered and limited according to Truth and Charity; lest, under a pretence to the latter, the former suffer injury. The work concludes with a defence of the Resurrection and Eternal Judgment; invectives (dissuasives) against atheism, idolatry, and superstition; and motives to engage all christians to endeavour to propagate pristine christianity, in all the nations of the world.”]

This may be considered as a body of divinity, according to the views of the general baptists of that age; and contains a laboured exposition and defence of their doctrines and practices. The author does not confine himself to those points in which they differed from other denominations; but takes a systematic view of the whole of revealed religion. This work is a folio, of upwards of six hundred pages; and gives us a high idea of the number and zeal of that denomination which, in such discouraging circumstances, could countenance the publication of so expensive a book. The churches in Lincolnshire must have their share in this praise; for Mr. Grantham assures us, that he undertook the task of composing this treatise at their importunity, and by their encouragement. [Epistle Dedicatory, ad finem.] And, when we consider his other engagements, and that he was, as he informs us, one that “got his bread by the labour of his hands, and never saluted the schools to gain the knowledge of their arts,” it must have been a heavy task; and remains a strong proof of his ability, industry and perseverance.

In 1687, the same indefatigable author published two small treatises in quarto; which now lie before us. One is called, “Presumption no proof:” and is a reply to two advocates for infant sprinkling; Mr. Petto and Mr. Firmin. The other is entitled, “Hear the Church: or an Appeal to the Mother of us all. Being an Epistle to all the baptized Believers in England, exhorting them to stedfastness in the Truth, according to the scriptures”, &c. This is an attempt to trace out the doctrine and discipline of the first Christian church at Jerusalem; and to prove the propriety of appealing to her, as the mother of all succeeding christian societies, for a standard of faith and practice. It is principally levelled against the papists; but occasionally enters into the general subjects of controversy with the paedobaptists.

Mr. James Marham, a respectable tradesman, and most probably a member of the general baptist church at Spalding, settled at Holbeach, in this county, about 1681. There were then no dissenters in the town; and this zealous man determined to endeavour to raise an interest. He invited several baptist ministers, both general and particular, to preach in his

house, and a congregation was soon collected. This raised a violent opposition amongst his neighbours; and the laws were enforced against him and his assistants. In less than a year, levies were made upon him for fines to the amount of several scores of pounds: and he was frequently driven from one justice to another, for four days in the week; till he was compelled to forsake his business and his habitation. Still he persevered in his attempt. William Rix, the particular baptist minister at Wisbeach, and Samuel Phillips, a deacon of the church at Spalding, were both apprehended or preaching at this house. Mr. Marham boldly appeared for them, exerted himself successfully in their behalf; and they were dismissed, for want of evidence. The magistrates, disappointed of their prey, and exasperated at the intrepidity of Mr. Marham's conduct, determined to wreak their vengeance on him. One of the bench addressed him thus: "Marham, I will send you to jail: and I will ruin the anabaptist meeting in this country, or they shall ruin me out of my house. The people of Holbeach were all of one religion till you had meetings in your house." To prison the good man was sent; and sustained great loss and charge before he regained his liberty. He was, afterwards, stript of all his goods, and obliged to board himself and his wife for more than a year. Yet, he still persisted in exerting himself in behalf of those who were persecuted for conscience' sake, by instructing and defending them when brought before the magistrates; till his enemies were so enraged, that they threatened to "knock him on the head." He however, was preserved from their fury, and lived to do much and suffer much for the good cause in other places.

Notwithstanding this storm, the baptist interest was supported at Holbeach, and a regular society soon formed, which, at the Revolution, consisted of thirty members. It is probable, that, for many years, it was considered as a branch of the church at Spalding: as Mr. Samuel Phillips, already mentioned, removed to Holbeach, and continued, for a long time, the regular preacher to this congregation. This appears to be the origin of the general baptist church that now exists at Fleet. [B.M.S.S. from a scarce pamphlet, called "The Lynn persecution," printed in 1693, communicated by Mr. Richards of Lynn.]

In the scarcity of information respecting the internal state of these churches, one pleasing exception offers itself. The Records of the general baptist church at Spalding are preserved and contain an interesting and authentic document, entitled, "An Account of the officers and members appertaining to the church of Christ in Spalding, Bourn, and Hackenby [now written Heckingby], and the parts adjacent, taken the 31st day of the 6th month, 1688." This list, which occupies almost five folio pages, is fairly written, by one hand, in the front of the church-book. At the head stands the name of Thomas Grantham, messenger, followed by Thomas Lawson, and Joseph Hooke, elders; Luke Copeland, John Watson, and Samuel Phillips, deacons; and Israel Cave, Robert Booth, Robert Vellem, John Willey, Thomas Ives, and Thomas Maw, gifted brethren. These are succeeded by the names of such of their wives as were in fellowship; and a long catalogue of members, which amount in the whole to one hundred and fifty-three. [B.M.S.S. from the original.] From this document it appears, that this church was then in a flourishing state; and plentifully supplied with labourers. How long it had existed, it is not easy to say; but, from the circumstances in which we find it, at this date, it evidently had been established a considerable time. Probably a society of baptists had existed here from the time that Mr. H. Denne preached at this place, in 1646. [See page 106.]

How far the limits of this church extended is not easy to determine. Bourn lies twelve miles west of Spalding, and Heckingby four miles north of Bourn: and the members appear to have resided at considerable distances in other directions: at Gosberton, a hamlet six miles north of Spalding; at Holbeach, a market-town eight miles east of it; at Fleet, a village two miles more eastward; and at Lutton, Gedney, and Moulton, places in the same neighbourhood. [B. M. S. S. from Spalding Church Book.]

We know but little of the officers of this church, previous to this date of the list. Mr. Grantham's name is probably inserted, merely as the president of the meeting of August 30th, at which the review of the members took place. When laxity of discipline, or want of zeal, had introduced confusion and irregularity into any society, it became the duty of the messenger to summon the officers and members of such a society in order to meet him, for the purpose of "setting in order the things that were wanting." This was most probably the case in this instance: as a new church-book was provided, and a new list of members made out. It is, however, possible, that Mr. Grantham might have removed his communion from the church in the South Marsh to Spalding, and thus have become a member of this church.

Thomas Lawson, the first elder mentioned, probably, advanced in years, and had sustained the office for some time. As he dwelt at it Spalding, it may be concluded, that his labours in the ministry would be chiefly in that neighbourhood. Joseph Hoke was much younger than his colleague; having been baptized only eleven years, and ordained elder the September preceding. He resided at Heckingby, and was principally employed as a preacher and pastor at Bourn, and the places adjacent. Here he laboured diligently and successfully for nearly fifty years; and will frequently be introduced in the sequel of our narration: [B.M.S.S. from Bourn Church Book.] in which we shall also have occasion to advert to several other of the officers and ministers enumerated in this document.

Respecting the other general baptist churches in Lincolnshire, which were mentioned in the last chapter, we have very little information, during this period. The society at Coningsby and Tattershall continued to flourish; and, in 1672, unanimously chose Charles Warwick to be their pastor. [C.C.B.]

SECT. 4.--An Account of General Baptists, during this period, in the counties adjacent to Lincolnshire.

The Records of the church at Fenstanton, which furnished us with such copious materials in the last chapter, are wholly lost during this period: and we know little of the circumstances of that society, except what may be collected from accidental referencers. It appears that it continued to flourish, under the pastoral care of Messrs. John Denne and Edmund Mayle: and there can be no doubt but it experienced a portion of the troubles which were felt by dissenters in general: though, probably, in a less degree than in some other parts of the kingdom. Mr. Crosby says, that Mr. John Denne was once fined for preaching; which, doubtless, happened before the Revolution. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 115.]

Of the neighbouring church at Warboys we have some documents, but in a very deranged and mutilated state. In 1661, a reconciliation took place between this church and William Dunn, their former pastor, which appears to have much strengthened their hands. There are only fragments of entries from this date, to 1676, when William Dunn appears to have been dead; and a remissness of discipline had crept into their proceedings. This produced its natural effects, in the decline of the cause; and arrested the attention of the friends of religion. August 29th. 1676, the subject was taken into serious consideration, at a meeting called for the purpose; when it was resolved to "look more strictly to the punishing of offenders, knowing that due exercise of judgment is pleasing in the sight of the Lord." In order to do this more effectually, they took an account of the members then in communion. The number amounted to seventy-one; and thirteen others were soon added. At the head of the list, stand the names of Edmund Mayle of Fenstanton, and John Denne of St. Ives. From this circumstance, and there being many of the members who dwelt at Fenstanton, we were led to suppose, that the two neighbouring churches had united; till we found them acting as separate societies a few years afterwards. At this time, there existed, an unhappy difference between Mr. John Lacy, who was an elder in the church at Warboys, and Messrs. J. Denne and Edmund Mayle, which embroiled the church till 1687, when it was amicably settled. This must have greatly retarded the progress of the cause, and prevented the success which might have been the result of their united and friendly exertions.

In 1682 John Stoakley, who had for some time acted as teacher to this church, died: and the greatest part of the ministerial labour devolved on Thomas Ridman. The cause appearing to gain strength under his ministry, he was, in 1684, ordained elder of this congregation, by Messrs. J. Denne and E. Mayle. Several additions were made to the church, in the following two years but in 1687, Mr. Ridman's labours were cut short by death. Yet they were not forsaken: "Blessed be God," they say, "he hath given light to others of his servants, that, according his gospel may run and be glorified: and that the ministration of it may not cease in the following year, Mr. T. Grantham laboured for some time amongst them; and administered the ordinances of baptism and imposition of hands. It does not appear, from the imperfect records that have, come to our hands, that any of the members of this church were imprisoned on account of their religion; though it is evident, they held themselves in readiness to suffer for its sake. Soon after the first declaration against conventicles, in 1661, we find them observing. "The churches now break up their meetings, like men unwilling to bear the cross of Christ. This is too great an evil to be endured: for, if it be of God to meet together, it is not of God to break up and, consequently, not lawful." And, at the close of the year, they say, "The church is in very good order, blessed be God: and uphold their meetings, through evil report and good report." In 1682, they remark, "e uphold our meetings together, through the blessing of God, although they are broken up in many places." On the following year, they have this memorandum: "This year presents us with great rumours of troubles abroad: the meetings in London broken up, and brethren haled to prison: yet this noise doth not trouble us with fear: for we are all content to suffer for Christ; knowing it is the lot of the righteous, not only to believe, but to suffer for his sake." They were soon called, in some measure, to exemplify their principles. In 1684, they say, "Notwithstanding the aforesaid trouble, which rather increases than abates, the brethren are zealous for the faith, and increase the

number: there being some added to the church, and continue in the apostles' doctrine, in breaking of bread and prayer; with preaching from house to house, not being permitted to preach in our meeting houses." It was very natural, therefore, for them to rejoice at the prospect of the termination of these persecutions and, at the close of the year 1687, they exclaim, "Blessed be God, we have now some prospects of peace, even when we looked for trouble: so that God has fulfilled his gracious promise, saying, 'You shall sit down under your own vine, and none shall make you afraid. The Lord grant that we may improve it to his honour, and our souls' good.'" [W. C. B, under the various dates.]

In this period, probably towards the beginning of it, died Mr. Henry Denne; an indefatigable, zealous, and successful minister of the gospel; and a steady and active friend to the general baptist cause. When he was born, does not appear; but he joined the baptists about 1643. His labours for that denomination having been noticed in the course of this history, See pp. 101-104, 107, 145, 149, 152, 162, and 172.] it will be sufficient here to observe, that, in the former part of the civil wars, his usefulness as a minister being frequently interrupted by persecution, he quitted his living at Elsley: and, being zealous for the liberties of his country, like many other pious ministers of different denominations, he went into the army; where he gained great reputation, both as a preacher and a soldier. When the contest was decided, he appears to have returned to his charge; as we find him labouring at Elsley, under the protectorate. It is not improbable, that he continued to enjoy this living, till the restoration forced him out. It has been generally supposed that he died soon afterwards: Mr. Crosby says about 1661. His character will be collected from the facts we have already recorded: and so highly did his contemporaries esteem him, that his name alone was thought a sufficient panegyric.*

[* The Epitaph, written by a clergyman of his acquaintance, and put on his grave, was in these terms: "To tell his wisdom, learning, goodness, unto men, I need to say no more; but, Here lies Henry Dunne." There is, indeed, a Mr. Denne mentioned, in Bunyan's *Peacable Principles and True*, in terms of great disrespect; and insinuations are thrown out against his character. If this was our author, it is probable that he was living in 1670, when this piece appears to have been written. This attack, however, is made in so vague a manner, and there is evidently such a degree of asperity and irritation runs through the whole, that little can be built upon it. Yet it is plain, from Mr. Bunyan's work itself, that the most respectable particular baptist ministers did not esteem it any disgrace to shelter themselves under Mr. Denne's authority, even at the time when this author treats him with such sovereign contempt.--Crosby, Vol. I. pp. 297-307. Vol. III. p. 2.]

Mr. H. Denne published several pieces, chiefly of a controversial nature: as, "The Doctrine and Conversation of John the Baptist," 1642. "The Foundation of Children's Baptism discovered, and rased:" in answer to Dr. Featley and Mr. Marshall, 1645. "The Man of Sin discovered," 1645: which last two he republished, in 1646, together with "The Drag Net of the Kingdom of Heaven: or, Christ drawing all men," in one small volume, under the title of " Antichrist unmasked." In 1658, he printed an account of his dispute with Dr. Gunning, which he called, "A Contention for Truth." He likewise wrote some small tracts against the levellers and quakers. Besides these works, which are usually enumerated, a small piece has fallen into our hands, which we have never seen

mentioned. It is entitled, "Grace, Mercy, and Truth: containing, 1. God's Reconciliation to Man: and, 2. Man's Reconciliation to God. By Henry Denne, an unworthy servant of' the church. Formerly printed for the benefit of' the city of Rochester, reprinted 1696."

In the adjoining county of Cambridge, the general baptist cause gained ground during this period. It has generally been supposed, that the churches at Great Wilbraham and Milbourn were founded in the year 1675 the former by Mr. John Denne, who is said to have opened a meeting at his own house In that town, and the latter by Mr. Benjamin Medcalf. But we have seen, in the last chapter, that there were societies of general baptists at both places, during the protectorate: and it is plain, from the records of Warboys church, that Mr. J. Denne resided, in 1676, at St. Ives; and, in 1684. was an elder of the church at Fenstanton. Mr. Medcalf appears to have settled with the friends at Milbourn, probably about 1676; and continued to labour amongst them till his death in 1689. John Lacy, Solomon Hook, Thomas Clack, and Lewis Adley were actively employed as preachers amongst the Cambridgeshire general baptists, at this time; but we have not been able to collect much information respecting them.

In Norfolk, that laborious messenger of the churches, Thomas Grantham, laboured with great success. About the year 1686, he resided for some time at Norwich; where he founded the general baptist church in White Friar's-yard in that, city, which still exists. Having nursed that interest to a state of considerable maturity, he removed, towards the close of this period, to Yarmouth; in which populous town he likewise raised a church, which soon became numerous.

Mr. James Marham, who was the instrument of raising the church at Holbeach, about 1686, removed his residence to a village in Norfolk, not far from Wisbeach, called Walpole or WapoolBell, where the baptists appear to have been unknown. He had not been settled in this place three weeks, before his nonattendance at the established worship caused the parish officers to wait upon him, and require him either to frequent the parish church, or appear before the justice and rector, to answer for his neglect. Mr. Marham, without hesitation, complied with the latter requisition; and was closely examined by the magistrate and clergyman for upwards of four hours At the conclusion, the latter declared himself dissatisfied with his reasons, and appointed another day for resuming the conference. But a proclamation for liberty of conscience being issued in the interim, the rector declined engaging any further. Mr. Marham, the same week, opened a meeting at his own house, which was soon attended by several of his neighbours: and it pleased God so to prosper this undertaking, that, in a few years, a general baptist church that, in a few years, was formed at this place.

This society was, for a considerable time, under the care of Mr. Robert Booth, who appears to have removed from Spalding, to take the oversight of it. [*Theol. Mag.* for 180, page 11 3.-B. M. S. S.--This has been thought the original of the general baptist church at Wisbeach; but, as we have seen, that church was formed before the Restoration. Probably the two societies afterwards united.] There were many general baptists, at this time, in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and the counties adjacent. We have not the means of giving an account of the several churches and ministers; but Mr. Hooke has recorded a

fact, which gives us a high idea of their numbers and principles. The Confession of Faith which had been presented to King Charles II., by Mr. Grantham, in 1660, having been drawn up hastily for the occasion, was thought by some neither sufficiently explicit nor comprehensive. Probably with a view to remedy these defects, and to declare more distinctly their own sentiments on certain important points of doctrine and discipline, as well as to guard against the increase of popery which was then justly dreaded by every friend to religion and his country, the general baptists, in the counties of Bucks, Hertford, Bedford and Oxford, published, in 1678, another declaration of their tenets. This was called "An Orthodox Creed, or a Protestant Confession of Faith: being in essay to unite and confirm all true protestants in the fundamental articles of the christian religion, against the errors and heresies of the church of Rome." This Creed contained fifty articles, and was signed by fifty four messengers, elders and brethren of tile baptized churches, in behalf of themselves and others to whom they did belong." It is to be lamented, that neither Hooke nor yet Crosby who has preserved a copy of this creed, has recorded the names of the subscribers.*

[* Hook's *Necessary Apology*, p 39. Crosby Vol. II. p, 345.--Vol I. Ap. No. I.--As some late writers have asserted this Confession. of Faith to be Calvinistical, and ascribed it to the particular baptists, it may be necessary to state the reasons that have induced, us to claim it. Hooke, who was contemporary with Publishers, reckons it, with the Confession of 1660, as general baptists Creeds, in opposition to the particular baptist confession of 1688.--We know of no particular baptist churches, at this time, in these parts; but the general baptists were numerous.--This Creed asserts the necessity of the Messengers' Office, which probably was never acknowledged by the particular baptists. It also enjoins the laying on of' hands, as one of the principles of Christ's doctrine, Heb. 6:2, which many of the general baptists, at that time, practised.--But the Creed itself is decisive. These baptists held an election and reprobation of characters, not of individuals. "God has," they say, "elected all that do or shall believe in Christ." And "hath decreed to punish all those wicked or ungodly, disobedient, and unbelieving or impenitent sinners that have or shall despise grace." Respecting the extent of the death of Christ, they assert, that, "Christ died for all men, and there is a sufficiency in his death and merits for the sins of the whole world; and hath appointed the gospel to be preached unto all; and hath sent forth his Spirit to accompany the word, in order to beget repentance and faith: so that if any do perish, it is not for want of the means of grace manifested by Christ to them, but for the non-improvement of the grace of God, offered freely to them through Christ in the gospel." Orthodox Creed. Art. ix. x. xviii.]

One of the most ancient of these churches assembled at Aylesbury in the county of Bucks. It had most probably been gathered during the civil wars, as Edwards, in 1646, mentions the pastor: and after the restoration, was numerous and regularly organized. This town and neighbourhood drank deep of the cup of persecution; by their zeal against nonconformists. In 1664, having filled the county jail with dissenters, they hired two large houses, which they turned into prisons for their reception. And, not contented with daily imprisoning their persons and confiscating their goods, they attempted also to take away their lives. Among others, twelve general baptists were apprehended, when assembled for divine worship. These were Stephen Dagnall, their minister,--Ellit, a

teacher. Wm. Whitchurch, a glover and deacon; Thos. Hill, a linendraper, Thos. Monk, a farmer;--Brandon, a shoemaker, with three other men whose names have not been preserved; Mary Jackman, a widow with six children; and Ann Turner, spinster. Having been regularly convicted under the conventicle act, they were confined three months in prison, and then brought before the quarter sessions. The magistrates required them either to conform to the church of England and take the oaths, or to abjure the realm; and assured them, that if they refused to do one of these, sentence of death should be passed on them: according to the act of the thirty fifth of Elizabeth, which the Conventicle act had lately declared to be in full force. To give a colour of mercy to their proceedings, the prisoners were remanded till the afternoon to consider of their answer. When brought up again, they unanimously declared that they could neither conform to the church nor abjure their native country and relations, and must therefore throw themselves on the mercy of the court. They were instantly declared guilty of felony, and sentence of death passed upon them. Officers were sent to their houses to seize that little property they possessed, as forfeited to the crown; and these orders were executed in the most wanton and unfeeling manner.

The dissenters of every denomination in the town were justly alarmed at these violent and sanguinary proceedings, and immediately shut up all their shops; which, as they were a great majority of the inhabitants, spread terror and dismay through the place. One of the condemned persons, subdued by the tears and intreaties of his wife, promised to conform, and was accordingly set at liberty; but he felt such distress of mind for his apostacy, that he voluntarily returned prison, and waited with his companions the solemn event.

Thomas Monk, son to the prisoner of that name, immediately on passing the sentence, rode up to London; and waited on Mr. W. Kiffin, a particular baptist minister, of independent fortune, who had considerable influence at court.* After he had explained the alarming circumstances to that worthy man, they hastened together to the lord chancellor Hyde. This nobleman readily undertook to introduce them to the king; to whom they related the whole affair. That careless monarch seemed much surprized that any of his subjects should be condemned to death on account of religion; and, though he had, only a few months before, given his consent to the very act under which they were convicted, eagerly enquired whether there was any law in force that could authorize such a procedure. Being satisfied that there was, he promised a pardon, and gave immediately, the proper orders to the chancellor. But the applicants, reflecting that the passing of a regular pardon through all the necessary forms would require time, and that those who had shown such a readiness in pronouncing the sentence of death might be as precipitate in the execution, besought his majesty to grant them a reprieve. This was at once drawn up, signed, and delivered to Thomas Monk; who instantly returned with all expedition to Aylesbury. On his arrival, the news of his success diffused general joy among the nonconformists; filled their persecutors with consternation and dismay; and, for some time, checked the violence of their proceedings. The prisoners were confined till the next assizes, when the judge brought down his majesty's pardon, and they were all released. [Crosby, Vol. II. p. 180, This Author, as usual, calls these sufferers only baptists; but we conclude that they were general baptists, because S. Dagnall joined with F. Smith, 1659, in publishing W. Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man--because Thos. Monk signed the G. B.

Confession of Faith, in 1660; and a Thos. Monck, probably the son, was elder of a G. B, church at Berkhamstead, in 1675-and because several of these names appear in the records of G. B, churches in these parts, prior to the Revolution.--Jeffery's Whole Faith of Man, Title, 2d. Edit. Crosby, Vol. II. App. p. 90.—A.C.B. 1675.] [* Mr. Kiffin probably owed part of his influence at court to his property. King Charles once condescended to ask him for the loan of forty thousand pounds. Mr. K. apologized to the messenger for not being able to advance so large a sum; but desired him to inform his Majesty, that, if ten thousand pounds would be of any service, he would make him a present of it. This offer was graciously accepted: and the old man had such opinion of that monarch's punctuality in paying his debts, that he used jocosely to observe to his friends, he had saved thirty thousand pounds by his liberality. Crosby, Vol. III. 4.]

Another large and ancient general baptist church in these parts, which flourished during the period which we are now reviewing, included Chesham in Buckinghamshire, and Berkhamstead in Hertfordshire, with various villages adjacent to these towns. We are not able to state the time of its formation, the original church books being, most probably, long since lost. Its present records, which are now lying before us, commence the 9th day of the 9th month (Nov. 9th) 1676. This society was then in a flourishing state; and consisted of at least one hundred members, under the care of Mr. John Russell, elder, and five or six deacons. It must, therefore, have existed a considerable time before this date; probably it was first gathered during the protectorate.

It is painful to record the contentions of good men; yet, in an impartial account of their actions, it is necessary to notice them. It is evident that, at the time when these records commence, there existed an unhappy difference between Mr. Russell and Nehemiah Neale, who appears to have been a leading man among them. What was the object of contention does not very plainly appear; but it is probable that it arose from some difference of opinion respecting the maintenance of ministers. It produced a division in the society; the majority adhering to the pastor, Mr. Russell, and, May 25th, 1677, withdrawing from twenty-six of the disaffected, who favoured Mr. Neale. The minority formed themselves into a distinct church: and afterwards chose Daniel Field for their pastor. For some time, an unhappy distance was maintained between these two congregations; but at length a reconciliation was effected, and they treated each other as sister churches.

The members of this congregation appear to have suffered greater persecution than some of the neighbouring churches. In order to assist each other in bearing the weight of these oppressions, nine of the principal members, in 1682, entered into an agreement, to bear each an equal, portion of any fine that might be levied on any of the society on account of religion: a liberal undertaking, that proved, at once, their zeal for God, and their love to the brethren. The names of these worthy men were, Richard Young, John Russell, John Garrett, F. Lewin, George Catherall, Henry Baldwin, Charles Edge, Robert Catlin, and T. Laird.--As this church now belongs to the New Connection, we shall have occasion to trace it through the several succeeding periods to the present time.

Another general baptist church, closely connected with this, was formed at Amersham, Buckinghamshire, in 1675, by about, twenty persons, who had been members of another society of the same faith, of which we have no account. These seceders became convinced that the laying on of hands on all baptized believers was a scriptural practice, which the church with which they had stood connected not only neglected but opposed. After some fruitless attempts to procure an amicable dismission, they withdrew; and sent to the church in Dunning's-alley, London, for assistance. That congregation sent down their elder, John Griffith, to form them into a separate church. Dec. 14th. 1675, Mr. Griffith laid hands on eighteen persons, who immediately formed themselves into a church state, drew up and signed articles of agreement which they desired to observe as a society; and, on Mar. 12th following, sat down together, for the first time, at the Lord's table.

Their first church act appears to have been the chusing of David Jameson for their elder, and Edward Rudrup deacon. In. the following year, they purchased a piece of freehold ground for a burying ground; and appear to have proceeded with zeal and alacrity in the cause: many being added to them in the course of a few years. They were liberal in their contributions for the support of their poor members; and especially for the relief of those who were prisoners for the truth. They cherished an affectionate regard for Mr. Griffith; and during his long imprisonment, which commenced soon after his visit to them, the frequently sent their messengers to Newgate with tokens of their sympathy and esteem. In less than a year several of their own members were apprehended, and fined for being at a meeting: and some suffered tinder false accusations. The leading men in the neighbourhood countenanced the informers, which spread a general consternation and dismay: insomuch that the person of whom they rented the room in which they had their meetings for worship, though a member of the church, refused to permit them to assemble upon his premises, unless they would give him a bond to bear him harmless against the consequences. This the church declined; and chose rather to build a meeting-house on their own ground. Discouraging as the times were, they prosecuted this undertaking with so much zeal, that, in less than two months, it was ready for use: being opened Dec. 30th. 1677. The whole expence was twenty-six pounds, of which seventeen pounds were subscribed at one meeting.

So early as 1678, this society found it prudent to have another elder, to assist Mr. Jameson in the ministry and oversight of the church; and elected Mr. Nicholas Bennett; who was ordained to that office, Dec. 8th, by Mr. Jameson, assisted by Mr. Fell, at that time elder of the church at Berkhamstead. It is evident, a spirit of zeal for the cause of God pervaded all the members; of which their records furnish many pleasing instances. One may suffice as a specimen. When the deacons, gave in their accounts, in Oct. 1686, there was a considerable balance against the church, which was immediately discharged by a sister Hill. [B.C.B. at the various dates.] The churches of which we have just been speaking appear, through the whole of this period, to have maintained a mutual correspondence with each other, by means of associations of their ministers and representatives. But, when we consider the severity of the laws then in force, we shall not expect that such meetings could be either regular or frequent. We have traces of an association at Aylesbury, Mar. 20th. 1678, to which the Berkhamstead church sent two

representatives: as they did, the preceding Whitsuntide, to the general assembly in London. [Ibid. 1677. 1678.]

We have only very slight notices of any other general baptists, during this period, on the north of London; though there is sufficient reason to conclude that, in several counties besides those already mentioned, they were numerous and flourishing. This appears to have been peculiarly the case in Northamptonshire, where those active and able ministers, Francis Stanley, of East Haddon, and Benjamin Morley, of Ravensthorpe, sustained the office of messengers. They were successfully supported by the labours of John Ieas, of East Haddon, William Smith and William Bliss of Welton, John Gilby, of Long Buckby; J. Grunden, of Cocket, John Stanton, of Blissworth, Stephen Curtis, of Harringworth, Joseph Slater, William Stanger, and Robert Bringham, who all appear to have been employed in preaching the gospel, and all suffered for their conscientious attachment to what they esteemed truth. A few particulars of their sufferings have been preserved, and ought to be recorded.

William Smith, the pastor of a general baptist church at Welton, was a man of excellent parts and learning, an useful and faithful minister, and much respected even by many members of the established church. being once engaged in preaching, on a Lord's-day, a military officer, attended by several soldiers, entered the place; and, commanding him to be silent, informed him that he was his prisoner. On Mr. Smith's asking the officer for his warrant, he put his hand to his sword, and said, 'This is my commission!'--"That is a highwayman's commission, replied Mr. Smith and you have no other I shall not regard it," and went on with his discourse. The leader, feeling the illegality of the proceedings, placed his men at the door, to prevent the escape of the conventiclers, and went to procure a warrant. During his absence, Mr. Smith finished his sermon; and, joining his hearers, they pressed by the soldiers, and retired to their own habitations. When the officer returned, he was highly incensed against the soldiers; but they pleaded their inability to prevent their passing.

On another occasion, the constable of Welton, was obliged to seize Mr. Smith's goods, in consequence of a warrant brought to him, by a greedy informer; who hoped to purchase them, at a low rate, for his own use. But the constable, in order to disappoint his unjust designs, had them cried, at Daventry-market, to be sold wholesale, and not retail; and fixed a very high price upon them. This prevented the informer from bidding; and, no other purchaser appearing, the constable sold them, for thirty shillings, to a friend of Mr. Smith's, who immediately restored them to their proper owner. Into his hands, also, the constable put the purchase money, on his promise to repay it when demanded which never happening, Mr. Smith recovered all his property without any expence:--so highly was he esteemed by his neighbours. He did not, however, always escape so easily. He was once committed to Northampton jail for preaching: but we have no particulars on his imprisonment or release. We are, also, unacquainted with the time of his death; which probably happened near the Revolution. He published a work on the personal reign of Christ, another on George Keith's Sermons, and a third, in answer to Mr. Hunt's piece on infant baptism. His name was affixed to the general baptist Confession of Faith, of 1660,

after it had been presented to the king. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 141. Whiston's Memoirs, Vol. II. p. 575.]

John Grunden and John Stanton were likewise committed to prison by a bishop's writ, and laid there for a long time, tradition says for three years and a half, till they were released by king James's proclamation for liberty of conscience. They were, besides, stript of their goods and cattle, for their nonconformity. Stephen Curtis, another useful minister in this county, suffered, on the same account, imprisonment for several years, and great loss of property. His associates, Joseph Slater, William Stanger, and Robert Bringhurst, for some time, avoided confinement, by fleeing into another county. Their goods and cattle were seized and sold; but redeemed by some of their friendly neighbours. At length, being pursued by a legal process, they were apprehended in their retreat, and obliged to pay exorbitant fees to regain their liberty. During this period, William Reeve was messenger of the baptized churches in Nottinghamshire, and resided at Hempston. He baptized Joseph Hooke, in 1676. [B.M.S.S.] There is reason to conclude that, at this time, several general baptist churches existed in this county. Aaron Jeffery, who afterwards introduced the cause into Gamston and Retford, was connected with two societies, which assembled at Collingham and Misterton, and appear to have been of some standing. We are sorry that no particulars respecting them have come to hand. There were, also, in 1688, general baptist churches at Leominster, Worcester, and Litchfield. This is evident, from a work published in that year, by William Pardoe; which he dedicated, in that year, by William Pardoe, which he dedicated to his much esteemed friends of those three societies. The author was a worthy, pious, humble and successful general baptist minister; and a great sufferer on account of his religion. His usual residence was near Worcester; but he laboured in various parts of Leicestershire and Yorkshire; and was past of the church at Litchfield, in 1688. He died August 1692. He wrote part of his "Ancient Christianity revived," or Bethania," the work just mentioned, in Leicester prison, and part of it in Worcester jail. It is probable, from the last article, that there were general baptists, in the Restoration and the Revolution; though we have been able to collect little information respecting them. Mr. John Smith, who was ejected from Wanlip, in this county, and afterwards occupied a farm in Charley-forest, where he preached frequently, seems to have been of this persuasion. He was a worthy man; and his funeral sermon was preached, by Mr. Ogle, at Diseworth. A baptist church also was collected, during this period, at Mountsorrell, by Mr. R. Adams, who had been ejected from Humberstone. He suffered much for his religion in the country; and, removing to London, became, for a short time, the pastor of the general baptist church at Shad Thames. He soon joined the particular baptists; and took the charge of a church of that denomination, in Devonshire-square. We have seen, however, that there were general baptist churches at Leicester, Eccleshelton, and Mount-sorrell, previous to the Restoration: and the inscriptions, in the burying-ground belonging to the old general baptist meeting-house in the last place, would lead us to suppose that, at this time, the society there was respectable; as several persons from a distance were interred in their cemetery. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 35, 37. Wilson, Vol. IV. 257, 352.--Supra, p. 160.]

There is some reason to believe that general baptists existed in Yorkshire, during this and the preceding periods. Edwards informs us that the itinerants front Mr. Lamb's church

went into Yorkshire: and elsewhere the same author mentions certain anabaptists about Sowerby, near Halifax. Francis Smith, an eminent general baptist in London, published a work, probably towards the close of the Protectorate, which he dedicated to "all that are called to be saints, especially my dear friends in the West Riding of Yorkshire." These he styles, "fellow-travellers;" and addresses them as such as "through the rich grace of God, with their might had rendered themselves to Christ is their Saviour: and with all free affection, and humble submission, chosen him to be their king, to rule them; their priest, to make atonement for them; and their prophet, to teach them: in a word, their all." When we consider the importance which these good men attached to their distinguishing sentiments, it is highly probable that those whom they addressed, in language like this, were of their own denomination. It is rendered still more probable, when it is recollected that part of William Pardoe's successful ministry was, as we have just seen, partly exercised in Yorkshire. [Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part I. pp. 65, 125, Smith's *Signs of a Dying Christian*. Ded. first Edition. Crosby, Vol. III. p. 114. That there were baptists at Sowerby, previous to the civil Wars, is probable, because, Mr. Robert Tillotson, a respectable clothier, of that place, is said to have become a baptist soon after the birth of his son John, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, in 1630. This gave occasion to the enemies of that prelate to reproach him with being unbaptized; and to say, that, there were fathers of the church who never were her sons." Birch's Life of Tillotson, prefixed to his works, pp. i. and cxii.] We should be highly gratified in any documents to confirm these conjectures.

SECT. 5.--The History of the General Baptists in London and its vicinity, from the Restoration to the Revolution.

The general baptist church in Bell-alley continued to flourish after the Restoration, under the care of its founder, Mr. Thomas Lamb; who appears to have been assisted in his ministerial labours by Mr. John Batty, and occasionally, by Mr. H. Denne. It early felt the scourge of persecution, and found it necessary to take every lawful method to abate its fury. Mr. Lamb and his colleagues, therefore, joined with the London baptists, in a vindication of themselves; which they published, on account of Venner's insurrection, under the title of "An Apology for some called Anabaptists, in and about the city of London, in behalf of themselves and others of the same judgment with them." It contains a strong appeal to their former declarations, in proof of their uniform acknowledgment of the duty of obedience to civil government; not as a matter of policy or necessity, but from a conscience not daring to disobey. They make an earnest claim of protection, by the magistrate, from all violence and injury on account of their conscientious differing in some points purely religious; and conclude thus: "We desire and endeavour to behave ourselves in all good conscience towards God and man: remembering that rule of our Lord, that we are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's: and that we, as well as our rulers, must certainly, at the great day, be accountable to the great and righteous Judge of all the earth for all our doings." This was a well-timed and necessary measure and appears to have been sanctioned by the whole body of baptists in the metropolis, both general and particular. Indeed it is evident, that, at this time and for many years afterwards, on all public occasions in which their distinguishing tenets were not interested, the leading men of both parties, in London,

frequently acted in concert. [Grantham's Christ. Prim. Book III. pp 10-12. The reader will see, in the note, p. 191, the reasons which lead us to suppose that the signatures, on p. 9. in Grantham, belong to this apology. That the ministers of both parties united on this occasion, I r. obvious, from an inspection of the signatures. For while we have the names of Kiffin, Spilsbury, &c. heads of the particular baptists; we have, also, Lamb, Batty, H. Denne, Gosnold, F. Smith, Thomas Lathwell, and John Clayton, leaders of the general baptists the last three of whom had signed the general baptist Confession of Faith, which had been presented to the king,, a few months before, by Messrs. Grantham and Wright.]

Mr. Samuel Oates continued connected with this church, though he was chiefly employed in itinerating in various parts of the country. Crosby says that he was minister of a baptist church in Lincolnshire: and mentions a public dispute which he maintained, in Leicester castle, against infant baptism, with Mr. Sheffield, in the presence of Sir Thomas Beaumont, and several other magistrates. This dispute was conducted with great fairness and temper, and lasted three hours. if we credit Dr. Calamy, from whom our author, copies the account, it ended in Mr. Oates being gravelled with an argument of Mr. Sheffield's; and confessing that he could not at the moment answer it. Such, however, was the respect which even his enemies had for his character and abilities, that, some time after the Restoration, he was offered "a great place," by the Duke of York, on condition of his conforming to the church of England. In an evil hour the temptation prevailed: he conformed; and was presented to the benefice of Hastings, in Sussex. But neither the dignities nor the emoluments of his new situation could stifle the voice of conscience. He felt that he had acted wrong, and resolved to retrace his steps. He, accordingly, resigned his preferments in the establishment, and returned to Mr. Lamb's church, in which he continued, probably as a private member, for five or six years, till his death. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 59-61.]

We have no further account of Mr. Lamb. His death is placed in 1672, when he must have been far advanced in years. He had eight children in the time of archbishop Laud, who was beheaded in 1645: so that Mr. Lamb must have

been upwards of seventy in 1672. When we consider the various sufferings, severe fatigues, and incessant labours of his long life, it is not improbable, that, in his old age, he was infirm and incapable of much exertion: and this may account for the little information which we have of him in the last years of his life. He was a zealous and active minister of the gospel; a very diligent and acceptable preacher; and an intrepid and steady friend of religious liberty. His character stood among his contemporaries, and his success was great. In 1644, he was styled, by an opponent, a principal baptizer, and an apostle in the account of his party." In 1647, another assures us that "his congregation was by far the largest and most fruitful of all the anabaptist churches:" and there is sufficient evidence in the preceding pages of this history of the truth of this account. [See above, pp. 98-101, 113-115.] 242

Mr. Lamb was the author of several works. So early as 1642, he published a quarto, on Particular Predestination: and another, in 1656, dedicated to his highness, the Protector, under the title of "Absolute freedom from Sin by Christ's death for the world." He

likewise printed a pamphlet, entitled "The Fountain of free Grace opened." We have not been able to procure a sight of any of these books; but Mr. Crosby, who appears to have read them, informs us, that the object of the author was to reconcile particular election with universal redemption; in opposition to the scheme of conditional election, espoused by the famous John Goodwin.*

[* Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 54-56. Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 386. *The Anabaptists' Groundwork found false*: 1644, Title.-Towards the close of the Protectorate, a Thomas Lamb, who was, as Mr. Baxter phrases it, who succeeded Mr. Lamb in the charge of the church in Coleman-street, we have no information: nor, indeed, is the church itself mentioned afterwards in any records that have fallen under a pastor of "an anabaptist Arminian church" in Lothbury, began to incline to an union with the Paedobaptists. While he was in suspense, his wife, unknown to him, informed Mr. Baxter, by letter, of her husband's state of mind, and requested that divine to write to him on the subject of his doubts. Mr. B. generously complied, and a correspondence ensued; the result of which was, that Mr. Lamb renounced his principles as a baptist; and, soon after conforming to the establishment, wrote violently against the separatists. Several authors have insinuated that this was the same person as the pastor of the church in Bell-Alley, of whom we have been writing; and Mr. Crosby has endeavoured to repel this insinuation. That writer, however, appears to have overlooked the most decisive circumstances. The letters that passed on this occasion are preserved in the appendix to Sylvester's *Life of Baxter*; and the account which Mrs. Lamb gives of her husband, completely removes any suspicion of identity which might arise from the similarity of the name, or proximity of the meeting-houses.--Mrs. Lamb's husband was "nourished and bred up," under Mr. J. Goodwin's ministry, for twelve or fourteen years; and was a member, and afterwards an elder in that church, till 1653. But our Mr. Lamb had no connection with Mr. Goodwin, opposed many of his opinions, and published against them, at the time that Mr. Baxter's convert was an elder in his church.--Again: Mrs. Lamb's husband first began to favour the opinion of the baptists in 1653, and after some time left Mr. Goodwin's church, and raised a society of baptists which, at the commencement, did not consist of twenty members, and never appears to have exceeded one hundred. But our Mr. Lamb was a native of Essex, espoused the principles of the baptists in that County, was brought up to London a prisoner for preaching them, at least twelve years, probably twenty, before Mr. Baxter's convert turned baptist: and nine years before that event, our Mr. Lamb was the pastor of a numerous, and flourishing baptist church in London. Lastly, Mrs. Lamb's husband began to waver, in 1657, and in a few months afterwards, renounced the principles of the baptists, left their connection, and dissolved his church. But Mr. Lamb of Bell-alley was a baptist in 1661, and his church continued for thirty or forty years after the dissolution of the other. They could not, therefore, be the same person. Sylvester's *Life of Baxter*, Part II. p. 180. Appendix No. III. pp. 51-66. Edit. 1696.]

Who succeeded Mr. Lamb in the charge of the church in Coleman-street we have no information: nor, indeed, is the church itself mentioned afterwards in any records that have fallen under our notice. Mr. Wilson informs us that he has seen a manuscript, under the date of 1705, which. speaks of the baptist church "formerly meeting in Coleman-

street:" from which it is probable, that it was dissolved towards the end of the seventeenth century. [Vol. II. p. 443.]

During the whole of these troublous times, Mr. John Griffith, was pastor of the general baptist church in Donnin's-alley. [See before pp. 119, 168.] This faithful minister, suffered great persecution and frequent confinement. It was asserted in his funeral sermon, that he spent, in the whole, "fourteen years, in sufferings, bonds, and imprisonment, for his Lord, and the testimony of a good conscience."

In 1661, he published a small pamphlet, which he called, "A Complaint of the oppressed, against the oppressor;" which gives a very affecting detail of the treatment endured at that time, by "godly men whom their adversaries could not justly blemish with the least fault." Some, he tells us, were apprehended in the streets, as they were going about their lawful concerns others, at their peaceable and public meetings and others, dragged out of their beds, at midnight, by armed soldiers, to the great terror of their families. And all this violence was often committed without any legal authority, not so much as a warrant from any magistrate, by the military, who paraded the streets, seized whom they pleased, "and carried them before some men called justices; but such only in name and title, nothing so in truth."--Not long after the publication of this Complaint, the author himself was apprehended, and committed to Newgate, where he lay seventeen months. After his release, he doubtless resumed his ministerial duties with his usual diligence and boldness; and he must have been, on many other occasions, in afflictions and bonds. We are not, however, in possession of any account of his proceedings previous to his last imprisonment; except that he was sent by his church, in 1675, at the request of a number of baptists at Amersham, to form them into a church state. His conduct on this occasion gained him the affectionate regard of that people; which they manifested towards him, during the whole course of his subsequent troubles.

In 1683 he was again seized for preaching, and, after having lain some time in confinement, was brought to the bar, at the Old Bailey sessions, April 18, in company with Mr. Bampffield, a worthy particular baptist minister; and a fellow prisoner for the truth. Mr. Bampffield being first required to take the oath of allegiance and refusing it, was remanded back to prison. The same oath was then tendered to Mr. Griffith; but he begged permission of the court, to state his reasons for declining it. The court not forbidding him, he spake at some length; and declared, that he could not take the oath of allegiance, because it bound him to the performance of things of which he was wholly ignorant, because they were not in existence; and of things, contrary to his conscience. For this oath required him to obey, not only the present king, but his successors, whose character he could not know, and who might be papists: and to observe, not only the laws now in force, but all that might in future be enacted, of the tendency of which he must be ignorant. Besides, this oath engaged him to comply with all the laws now in being, without exception; and, therefore, to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the church of England as by law established, and not to frequent any private meetings, as they were forbidden by the present statutes. He then appealed to the judges, whether he had correctly stated the obligations of this oath; and they unanimously declared that his ideas of its extent were accurate. After thanking them for their opinion, he resolutely said, "I

am well satisfied and settled in my religion; and the more so by what you have said: and, if it be so, do with me what you please: come life, come death, the Lord assisting me, I will never take the oath of allegiance." After this explicit declaration, he was ordered to his former prison, the press-yard of Newgate: and soon afterwards published an account of his case, which he concludes thus: "Here I remain the Lord's prisoner, and am ready further to bear my testimony for him--as one made willing through the free mercy and rich grace of God my heavenly Father, to forsake all for Christ, who hath loved me, and given himself for me: not counting my life dear to myself, so I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Such were the sentiments with which this worthy christian entered on this imprisonment; and his faith, patience, and resignation were fully exercised before its termination. We have no direct account of his release; but, from the records of the church at Amersham, it appears that he was in Newgate, Jan. 1686: so that he must, on this occasion, have been in confinement for nearly three years. It is probable that he did not obtain his freedom till a few months afterwards, when king James issued his proclamation for liberty of conscience.

Mr. Griffith was not without companions in tribulation. In the same prison were confined two pious ministers of the particular baptist denomination; Mr. Hercules Collins, and Mr. F. Bampfield: the latter of whom sunk under his sufferings, and died in Newgate, Feb. 16, 1684. Mr. Lawrence Wise, also, a general baptist, appears to have been his partner, through the whole of his last imprisonment. He had been a clergyman, and, in Oliver's time, preached in Aldgate church. Afterwards he obtained the living of Chatham-dock, in Kent, from which he was ejected at the Restoration. Having embraced the tenets of the baptists, he became pastor of a church in Goodman's-fields: and endured great sufferings for a good conscience. He was a person of learning and piety, and highly esteemed by his brethren. When king Charles wished to bribe the dissenters, to countenance his measures, by granting a general toleration, and sent for five of the principal ministers to sound the disposition of the party, Mr. Wise was one for whom he sent. He died in 1692. There was, also, a Mr. Daniel, or Vannell, who was a fellow prisoner with Mr. Griffith, and shared with him in the bounty of the Amersham church. For it was the practice of the churches, in those trying times, to make regular collections for the support of those who were prisoners for religion; and distribute the amounts according to their circumstances sending, at the same time, special messengers, to comfort and strengthen them, in the name of the church. Thus, the general baptists in White's-alley, in April, 1683, collected ten pounds for this purpose; and sent brethren Bellson and Taylor, with four pounds ten shillings of it, to the New Prison, to six. prisoners;--brethren Brooks, Martin, and Spillet, to the Counter, with three pounds, to brethren Smith and Jones; and brethren Tory, Martin, and Randall to Newgate, with two pounds ten shillings, to brethren Griffith and Wise. This last, indeed, had but a small portion, as his own friends had raised him fifty pounds. [Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 145, 361.--Vol. III. p. 32. Wilson, Vol. II. pp. 175-177. Ivimey. W.A.C.B. April 16th. 1683. A.C.B. 1683, 1684, 1686.]

The church in Paul's-alley, Barbican, flourished remarkably during the period of which we are writing. Its pious and diligent founder, Mr. J. Gosnold was highly esteemed by many persons of rank and influence: and perhaps this, joined to his modest and unobtrusive deportment, might, in some measure, preserve him and his friends from the fury of persecution. Yet his congregation was frequently disturbed, and he was sometimes obliged to conceal himself, to avoid the informers. He was, however, much followed; and his meeting-house, which was computed to hold three thousand, was generally crowded with highly respectable bearers. Six or seven clergymen regularly attended his lectures; and had a pew fitted up for their use, which screened them from observation. After the city had been destroyed by fire, in 1666, the overseers of Cripplegate parish, in which the meeting-house stood, observing the number and figure of the congregation, applied to them to make a collection for the poor. With this request they cheerfully complied, and collected upwards of fifty pounds: and, to shew their readiness to do good, they voluntarily repeated this collection annually for more than twenty years.--But Mr. Gosnold was called from his labours in the midst of his usefulness: he died Oct. 3rd. 1678, in the fifty-third year of his age: and was interred in Bunhill-fields burying-ground.

Mr. Gosnold was educated at Charter-house school; and from thence removed to Pembroke college. In early life he became chaplain to lord Gray. During the civil wars, he embraced the principles of the baptists, and gathered the church in Paul's-alley. Yet, though he left the establishment, he retained the friendship of many of his former associates, especially of Dr. Tillotson, with whom he maintained great intimacy. Mr. Gosnold was a pious and practical preacher; a man of singular moderation and candour, and had little concern with the disputes of the times. He did not, however, shrink from the defence of what he esteemed the truth; as the titles of two small treatises which he published evince: one was, "The Doctrine of Baptisms;" and the other, "On Laying on of Hands."

In 1678, Mr. Thomas Plant succeeded Mr. Gosnold, as pastor of the church in Barbican. His zeal and popularity excited the rage of his enemies to such a degree, that, on one occasion nine warrants were out against him at the same time: yet so highly was he esteemed, that all the constables employed to execute the warrants sent him private intimation, which enabled him to escape the danger. But his meeting-house was attacked, and the seats destroyed, by order of lord Bridgewater; whose house then stood near Paul's-alley. His lordship's house, however, was soon afterwards burnt to the ground; and several of his children, and the agent whom he used to employ in the work of persecution, were consumed in the flames. Yet this did not stop the rage of the informers: and Mr. Plant was often forced to walk the streets in such complete disguise, that the members of his own church could not recognize their pastor.

Mr. Plant had been a minister in London, for some time previous to his settlement at Barbican; and had taken an active part in the disputes with the quakers, in 1674: of which he published all account the same year. In 1688, he joined with Mr. Dennis in printing the narrative of the deplorable death of Mr. John Child. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 61-63, 113.-- Both Mr. Gosnold and Mr. Plant have been reckoned amongst the particular baptists, chiefly because their signatures are found, among the particular baptists, to the Apology

occasioned by Venner's insurrection, and to the vindication of Thomas Hicks against the quakers. But this argument is by no means conclusive; as both those pieces are signed by persons whose names appear to the Confession of 1660, and who must, therefore, be general baptists. The Barbican church was, doubtless, a general baptist church; and all its ministers, with the exception of Mr. Stennett, were, there is sufficient evidence, or the same principles.]

The church in the Spital, Bishopsgate-street, gathered by Mr. Edward Barber,* increased in numbers and respectability during this period. Its worthy founder continued to preside over it for a considerable time, and appears to have escaped persecution. The exact date of his decease is not known: but, in 1674, he was succeeded, in the care of the church, by Jonathan Jennings: and, probably, about that time, the congregation removed from the Spital to Whites-alley, Moorfields. [* Supra, p. 119.]

We know not with what church Mr. Jennings had been united, previous to his ordination over the people at White's-alley; but he was a general baptist at the Restoration, and signed the Confession of that party presented to the king, in 1660. Crosby informs us, that "he was a very able preacher, who, first and last, suffered twelve years' imprisonment." Many of his sufferings, therefore, must have been previous to his last settlement.

His labours among this people appear to have been greatly blessed. In 1682, the church had extended itself so widely, that it was thought expedient to separate it into four divisions; and to appoint persons to superintend the conduct and conversation of the members in each division. The church-books, which now lie before us, contain a list of the names of the members in two of these divisions, the north and the east, amounting to one hundred and ninety-four: so that this church then probably consisted of upwards of three hundred members. About this time, Mr. Richard Allen, afterwards pastor of the congregation in Paul's-alley, was called to the ministry by this church, of which he was a member; and was frequently employed in assisting Mr. Jennings.

Two instances are recorded of the interruptions experienced by this flourishing society. Mr. Allen being preaching, at Whites-alley, at five o'clock in the morning, to avoid observation, several soldiers rushed in, abused the hearers most grossly, threw one of the forms at Mr. Allen in the pulpit, broke down the galleries, and did more than forty pounds' damage to the building. On another occasion, as the same minister was delivering a lecture on a Thursday evening, he, and ten others, were seized, and sent to Newgate. He was fined ten pounds, and the rest several marks: but his friends obtained his release, and a remission of his fine, after he had been confined six or seven weeks; when his associates were also discharged, upon paying their fines. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 116, 161. Vol. IV. pp. 346, 405.--Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 190. W.A.C.B. 1682, &c.]

Mr. S. Loveday, who signed the Confession of Faith of 1660, continued the faithful pastor of the church on Tower-hill for the greatest part of this period; and, doubtless, sustained his share of the afflictions which all nonconformists, but especially the baptists, were then called to endure: though no account of his personal sufferings has fallen under our notice. A specimen of the treatment which his people received, will give us some idea

of the spirit of the times. One Lord's-day, when Mr. Jennings was preaching for this congregation, the officers entered, and placed a guard at each door of the meeting house. Mr. Jennings escaped in the confusion occasioned by this intrusion; but many of the hearers were beaten by the constables with their staves, and their names taken down. About seventy were apprehended, and carried before justice Smith, of Stepney fifty of whom compromised the matter, by bribing the officers, and the rest were committed to the New Prison. There they were crowded together, forced to lie on the ground, and used so barbarously, that several of them died. Their enemies carried their cruelty still further. A number of felons being removed out of a filthy cell, these conscientious men were thrust into it. At length, they were obliged to pay three pounds a week for two rooms, and permission to have their own beds. They were detained in prison, under these disadvantages, for four months: and, at last, fined each ten marks.

Mr. Loveday died, probably, in 1685, when he must have been very considerably advanced in years. He was a valuable man, a pious christian, and a useful preacher. His moderation was exemplary, and he seldom concerned himself with points of controversy. The most usual subjects of his public ministrations were such as had a tendency to stir up his bearers to live as christians, to watch against temptation, to be diligent in duty, and to aim at experimental communion with God; not to rest contented with external obedience, or a mere submission to ordinances.

His daily conversation was a practical comment on his public discourses; for, in all his conduct, he was an example of humility, piety, and morality. When he reproved, even his inferiors, it was without anger; and in such an affectionate manner as usually disarmed the offender. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 115. Vol. IV. p. 250.]

In 1686, Mr. Loveday was succeeded by Mr. John Maulden, a pious and worthy minister, and a steady nonconformist. He was prosecuted for absenting himself from the established worship, and fined twenty pounds a month. To satisfy this fine, his goods were seized, and he was committed to the New Prison, where he was confined amongst the felons. After some time, he, and several others, who were in custody on similar charges, were removed into a chamber in the prison, till set at liberty by the proclamation of liberty of conscience, in 1687.

On his release, he returned to his ministerial labours, and appears to have been very successful. The people were zealous and active; and, when persecution forbade them to assemble at their public meeting-house, they met together privately, at each others' houses. Soon after the Restoration, they removed their assemblies from Towerhill to a new meeting-house, built by themselves, in Goodman's-fields. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 138, P.I.--It may, perhaps, be proper to remark, that the precise situation of neither of these meetinghouses can be ascertained. The former is said, by some, to have been on Tower-hill; by others, in East Smithfield; and by others, in Looking-glass-alley, East Smithfield. Now as the dissenters, in these dangerous times, thought it prudent to build their places of worship in alleys and obscure streets, to avoid observation, it is not impossible, that Looking-glass-alley might then form a communication between Tower-hill and East Smithfield, and this meeting-house be situated in it. Thus, also, the meeting-house in

Goodman's- fields is stated in some accounts to have been in Rupertstreet, and in others, in Lambert street: probably in some alley running between these streets, which are contiguous.]

We have already mentioned Jeremiah Ives, the pastor of a general baptist church in the Old Jewry. He was a person of good natural parts, and of considerable learning, acquired by his own application. We know little of him, except from the controversies with the paedobaptists, the sabbatarians, and the quakers, in which he appears to have been almost incessantly engaged, from 1655 to his death. In 1674, Thomas Hicks, a baptist minister, having published some severe things against the quakers, they took great offence; and called upon the baptists, as a body, to do them justice against his calumnies and forgeries, as they styled his representations of their tenets and practices. Many books were published, and meetings held on this subject, which it would be tedious to enumerate. In this contest, Jeremiah Ives took a very active part, and was considered as the champion of Mr. Hicks; which caused the quakers to treat his character and memory with great severity.

These engagements raised Mr. Ives's fame so much, that king Charles II. determined to be a witness of his skill. He, therefore sent for this renowned baptist; and, desiring him to disguise himself in the habit of a clergyman, he introduced a romish priest; commanding them to dispute the merits of their respective churches in his presence. Though Mr. Ives humoured his Majesty in putting on a disguise, yet he retained his integrity. The priest opened the debate with a panegyric on the antiquity of the church of Rome. Mr. Ives replied at large; and argued, that, whatever antiquity the papists might claim,

yet, as their doctrines and practices could not be found in the New Testament, they could not be apostolical, or of divine origin. The priest, unable to, answer his reasoning, thought to silence him, by an appeal to his own practice; and told him that his argument would apply with equal force to infant baptism as to any of the catholic tenets. To this Mr. Ives replied, that the observation was just; and, therefore, infant baptism was as groundless as they. At hearing this, the priest broke up the conference, with no small indignation at the trick which had been played upon him; as he now discovered, that, instead of a clergyman of the church of England, as he supposed, he had been disputing with an anabaptist teacher. The rage of the champion for popery, and, probably, the anabaptist in disguise, afforded the merry king and his courtiers no small diversion.

Put Mr. Ives not only defended the truth against opposers, but suffered much for its sake; being imprisoned fourteen years for refusing to take the oaths which were then tendered to nonconformists. It seems, if we credit his adversaries, that his judgment changed during his confinement; and that, by taking the oath of allegiance, he obtained his liberty. We, however, know nothing further of him; nor does it appear what became of the church of which he was the pastor between thirty and forty years. Mr. Crosby says, "he was well beloved, and bore a fair character to his dying day;" which happened, probably, in 1675. [Supra, p. 168. Crosby, Vol. II. p. 308.--Vol. IV. p. 537. Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 603. Ellwood's *Life*, p. 183.]

There was another general baptist church, which, towards the close of this period, assembled at High Hall, near West Smithfield. Where its place of worship was, previously, we have no information; but its pastor was Dr. William Russell: who, like Mr. Ives, is best known by the disputes in which he was engaged. He signed the Confession, presented to the king, in 1660: in 1663, he published a piece against the sabbatarians; and, in 1676, an epistle concerning baptism.

This is almost all we know of him during this period.

From the era of the civil wars to the present time, there always have been a few baptists, both general and particular, who have maintained that the seventh day is the only sabbath instituted by divine authority: and, therefore, have held their assemblies for public worship on the Saturday. This peculiarity procured them the name of sabbatarians. Two general baptists in London, of these sentiments, suffered severely during the period of which we are treating; and it may be proper to mention them.

Soon after the Restoration, a small society of sabbatarian baptists assembled for worship in Bullstake-alley, Whitechapel, the pastor of which was John James. As he was preaching here, on the afternoon of Oct. 19th. 1661, a justice of the peace entered, accompanied by a constable; and ordered him to come down, for he had spoken treason against the king. On J. James refusing to comply, the constable pulled him out of the pulpit, and led him away, under a strong guard of the police. The auditors, amounting, in all to about thirty persons, were carried, seven at a time, before a bench of justices, who happened to be sitting at a neighbouring tavern. The oath of allegiance was tendered to each; and as many as refused it, both men and women, were committed to Newgate. The magistrates then adjourned to the meeting-house; and, taking their seats at the table, sent for John James. He was charged, on the oath of several profligate witnesses, with having used seditious language in his sermon; and, though he denied the charge in the most explicit manner, and it was solemnly contradicted by many who had heard the discourse, yet he was fully committed to Newgate. After his commitment, one of the witnesses, struck with remorse for what he had done, went to sea, to avoid being called upon at the trial; but was fetched back by the magistrate's warrant, and kept in custody till the sessions. Nov. 14th. J. James was arraigned for compassing the death of the king, endeavouring to levy war against him, and for attempting to change the government. To this indictment he pleaded not guilty, either in matter or form: and was remanded to prison, till the 18th, when he was brought up for trial. The evidence given on the examination was confirmed by the same witnesses; but J. James brought four credible persons, who deposed, on oath, that these witnesses had declared to them, that they had sworn against him they knew not what; and that they had been frightened and persuaded to say what they had. Several also, who knew their characters, offered to make oath that they were not to be credited: and four persons, who were present at the time when these treasonable words were said to be uttered, swore that no such words had been spoken by the prisoner. A verdict of guilty was, however, given. On the Friday following, he was brought to the bar and asked what he had to say for himself, why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. He replied, "I have not much to say; only shall leave two or three scriptures with you. One is, 'As for me, do as seemeth good unto you: but know

ye for certain, that if you put me to death, you shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof.' [Jer. 26:14, 15] Another is, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints:' [Psalm. 66:15] and the last is, 'He that toucheth the Lord's people, toucheth the apple of his eye.' [Zech. 2:8] And now I have no more to say for myself; only one word for the Lord, and I have done. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of all the kingdoms of this world." He was here interrupted by the court; and condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. This awful sentence did not dismay him: he calmly said, "Blessed be God! whom man condemneth God justifieth."

Between the sentence and the execution, he was remarkably supported. On the Saturday, several of his friends calling upon him, he proposed to finish the discourse which he was delivering when the officers apprehended him: and, having read the text [1 Cor. 6:20], he recapitulated what had been said, and concluded the subject with admirable composure and self-possession. While he lay under sentence of death, several persons of distinction, of both sexes, visited him; and were much affected with his piety and resignation. His wife applied personally to king Charles, to solicit a pardon; but was repulsed with scoffs and insult.

Nov. 26th. he was brought to the scaffold, when he addressed the spectators: assuring them that he was no jesuit, as had been slanderously reported; but an Englishman, of a poor and pious family, his aged mother being still living;--that he was a baptized believer, holding the principles of Christ's doctrine, mentioned Heb. 6:1, 2, and endeavouring to keep all the ten commandments, but especially the fourth;--and that, though he believed that Christ must govern the world by his saints, when the time appointed was come, yet he was innocent of treason; and had never, by word or by deed, endeavoured to disturb the government. He concluded, by exhorting the people of God not to be discouraged by his sufferings; but to remember the advice of the apostle, Heb. 10:25. Then, kneeling down, he thanked God for covenant mercies, and for conscious innocence: and prayed for the witnesses, for the executioner, for the people of God, for a removal of divisions, for the coming of Christ, for the spectators; and for himself, that he might enjoy a sense of God's favour and presence, and an entrance into glory. When he had finished, the executioner said, 'The Lord receive Your soul;' To which he replied, "I thank thee." A friend observing to him, 'This is it happy day,' J. James answered, "I bless God, it is." Then, thanking the sheriff for his courtesy, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and was immediately launched into eternity. When he was dead, his heart was taken out and burnt, his quarters affixed to the gates of the city, and his head set up in Whitechapel, on a pole, opposite the alley in which his meetinghouse stood.

Thus closed this affecting scene. And, whatsoever may be the opinion of the reader respecting the peculiar sentiments of this honest sufferer, or the frankness with which he avowed them, even in the face of death itself, he will perceived that the evidence of any disloyalty to the king, or design of disturbing the government, was extremely defective, and procured by means the most destructive of the liberty of the subject. He was, probably, selected as a proper example to strike terror in the party; and thus made a sacrifice to the dastardly policy of a weak administration. [Narrative of the

Apprehending, &c. of John James, quarto, 1662.--Nothing in this affecting account outrages humanity more violently than the unfeeling manner in which the officers of justice were permitted, perhaps encouraged, to treat this poor man. Though he was known to be in low circumstances, extravagant fees were extorted. No sooner was the sentence passed, than the tipstaff men seized his cloke, and demanded money from him for permission to wear it till his execution. But he replied, "I have but a short time to live, and these clothes will serve me." The day previous to his death, the hangman came, and required a bribe, that he might be favourable to him at his death. He at first asked twenty pounds; but, afterwards fell to ten. At last, he told the prisoner, that if he did not give him five pounds, he would torture him exceedingly: to which J. James calmly replied. "I must leave that to your mercy: for I have nothing to give you." From the account of the execution, it is to be hoped, that the piety and prayers of the sufferer softened the heart even of this savage.]

Another general baptist, of sabbatarian principles, was Joseph Davis, the worthy member of the church of Coventry, already mentioned. About the time when king Charles II. entered London, he was seized, and detained two days a prisoner. After Venner's insurrection, he was again apprehended: and, though he took the oath of allegiance, was confined in Oxford-castle till the assizes, when he was privately released. In the year following, he lay six months in prison; and, in 1663, was again committed. After he had been confined for about two years, he was brought into court, and the oath of allegiance again tendered to him. This he refused; lest, by repeating the same oath, he should incur the guilt of vain swearing: and, for this offence, he was remanded to his prison, and detained in custody ten years. In this interval he lost his wife, which appears to have greatly affected him. "Now," says he, "the proud waves went over my soul. My dear wife, who having had the incumbrance of my shop and three children lying upon her hands, despaired of my liberty, and of enjoying the assistance and comfort of a husband whom she entirely loved, fell into a deep consumption, of which she languished above two years, which much heightened my affliction. During this time, her affection carried her sometimes beyond her ability to come and see me; when she was so weak, that I was forced to carry her upstairs in my arms. But when she was near her death, I obtained liberty, in the year 1665, to see her last and put out my children to nurse: after which, I returned again to my prison, as ordered." It was, also, in this imprisonment, that he embraced the principles of the sabbatarians.

He obtained his release, in consequence of the royal indulgence, probably about 1673: and soon after removed to London. Here he commenced business a linen-draper, at first in a low way, but Providence blessed his endeavours, and he soon had a respectable shop in the Minories.

In less than eight years, however, a more violent storm of persecution arose: and this good man was fined twenty pounds a month for absenting himself from the church. His shop was attacked, while he was engaged in family worship; but his neighbours had so well secured the doors and windows, that the assailants could not enter. He took the first opportunity of removing his goods, and forsaking his business; and was obliged to conceal himself and family in lodgings for several years.

At the Revolution he opened shop again; and, like Job, the Lord blessed his latter end. He lived twenty years in comfort, and was enabled, not only to provide handsomely for his own family, but "to do something for the cause of religion at present and for the future." He died, Feb. 16th. 1707, when he had almost complete his eightieth year; and left an interesting account of his trials and supports as a legacy for his friends and descendants. [Davis's *Last Legacy*, passim. 1720.]

It is probable, that there were general baptists in the borough of Southwark, long before this period. Dr. Featley informs us, that the baptists, against whom he engaged so zealously, in 1644, had appeared in his neighbourhood twenty years before he wrote: and that two of their errors were, that "Christ died indifferently for all;" and that "God giveth to all men sufficient grace to be saved." In his time, as he pathetically complains, they were grown insolent, discovered themselves with open face, and demanded something more than a toleration. They preached, printed, and practised their impieties, openly; held their conventicles weekly; they flocked, in great multitudes, to their Jordans, and were dipt they defiled the rivers with their impure washings, the pulpits with their false doctrines, and the press groaned under the load of their blasphemies. From this lamentable outcry, it is evident, that the baptists were numerous and zealous in Southwark, during the time of the civil wars; though no particular account of their churches has come to our hands. There is reason to believe that the general baptist church at Shad Thames, Southwark, was gathered, during the protectorate, by Mr. John Clayton, who signed the Confession of 1660, and the apology, published after Vellner's insurrection. The earliest records of this society that have been preserved, commence in 1674; with the loan of which we have been kindly favoured. Some time previous to this date, a number of the members of this church, whose residence rendered their attending public worship at Shad Thames inconvenient, had built a meeting-house in the Park, Southwark; and this year, a division took place, by mutual consent, and the friends at the park became a distinct church. As upwards of one hundred and fifty members remained at Shad Thames, after this separation, the original society must have been numerous. Mr. J. Clayton was, at this time, their pastor assisted by several preachers, who had been raised up in the church: which, it appears, was then active and zealous, and particularly careful to maintain purity of doctrine. Mr. Clayton, and his friends, suffered much persecution. In 1683, Mr. Clayton was imprisoned for several months, and divers of his hearers fined: and, in the beginning of 1687, they were driven from their meeting-house, and obliged to assemble at a private house. But, soon afterwards, when king James II. issued his proclamation for liberty of conscience, they took the barge-house at Dockhead, in the same neighbourhood; which they fitted up for a meeting-house, and thence forwards were called the church at Dockhead.

In this year, also, some unhappy disputes, principally respecting the laying on of hands, which had long disturbed this church, were terminated, by the friendly interposition of an assembly of messengers, elders, and brethren, held in London; who advised mutual concessions and forbearance, and the exercise of brotherly love, and christian compassion one towards another. With this excellent advice the contending parties acquiesced; and

agreed to forgive each other, to pray to God to forgive the offence offered to his Majesty by their divisions; and to strive together, as formerly, for the faith of the gospel.

In the following year, Mr. George White, formerly the pastor of a general baptist church at Stonehouse, in Staffordshire, was invited to assist Mr. Clayton, whom age and infirmities had, probably, incapacitated for the labours of his office. The church agreed to support their infirm elder; but, as his name appears no more in their records, we may conclude that he died soon afterwards: perhaps in the commencement of 1689.

It was, as we have just seen, in the year 1674, that a general baptist church was formed in Winchester Park, Southwark, by a number of the members of the church at Shad Thames. This church has existed to the present day, and now assembles in Great Suffolk-street; but its records are, it is to be feared, irrecoverably lost; and we shall be able to give but a very slight account of its progress. The persons who formed this church had, some time previous to the division, built themselves a meeting house, in the Park, and met there as a branch of Mr. Clayton's church. The separation appears to have been made in the most amicable manner, merely as a measure of convenience. It was mutually agreed, that each party should exercise all their church discipline, choose their own officers, and maintain their poor. But, as there was but one pastor, Mr. John Clayton, it was resolved, for mutual accommodation, that he should continue an elder to both parties, and yield his assistance as pastor, as need should require, indifferently to both."

The cause was supported, for some years, with great harmony, by these two churches, under one pastor. They lent each other assistance, both ministerial and pecuniary; and united in observing stated seasons of fasting and prayer, which were held, alternately, at both the meeting-houses. After some time, probably when Mr. Clayton became less able to labour, the friends at the Park began to seek for other assistance; and invited Mr. William Marnor to help them. When he was ordained over them, we cannot learn; but he was preaching among them in 1683: and, before the Revolution, was settled over them. We have no information respecting him; except that his name was affixed to the confession of 1660; though, probably, long after its presentation. [S.T.C.B. Wilson, iv. p. 178. Whiston Memoirs, ii. p. 575.]

There were several general baptist churches during this period, in and near London, of which we have little information, except their names: and, probably some of which even the names are not preserved. Two of these churches ought to be noticed, as they will frequently occur in the course of this history.

The church at Deptford was gathered, probably, during the protectorate; though the first mention that we have of it is under the date 1679. It then was a regular organized church, and apparently numerous and flourishing: and it must have been of some standing, as its meeting. house was, soon afterwards, in a state of decay.

There was, also, a respectable general baptist church on the other side of the metropolis, which met in Glass-house-yard, Goswell-street; of which, after considerable labour, we have been able to collect only the few notices that follow. It is first mentioned, in the

church-books belonging to White's-alley, in 1681: but it must have existed long before this date, as a person is mentioned, as applying to that church for communion, who "some years past" had been in fellowship with the friends in Goswell-street. On this occasion, Thomas Kirby, an active member of White's-alley church, and afterwards pastor of the society in Goswell-street, was sent to them, with another brother, to make enquiries. It appears, from the same records, that, in 1686, this church had removed their place of worship. At this time, Thomas Kirby, with several others, were deputed from their church, to assist the friends "late of Goswell-street" in the election of deacons. They must, however, have returned to their former situation in 1688, as they then sent to the church, at White's-alley, to request their consent to ordain Thomas Kirby to the office of elder. This request was readily granted, provided that the ancient agreement was observed by all the parties. [W.A.C.B. at the respective dates.]

This proviso refers to a very close union which then subsisted among several general baptist churches in and near London, which continued till towards the middle of the eighteenth century, and is not yet wholly dissolved. When it was formed does not appear; but, as we have just seen, it was called an "ancient agreement" in 1688. It is not improbable that these churches had a common origin, and were derived one from another: though it may not be easy to determine which was the parent stock; perhaps either Mr. Barber's, or Mr. Loveday's congregation. At the close of the period which we are now reviewing, the churches thus united were those of White's-alley, Goodman's-fields, Dunning's-alley, Goswell-street, Dockhead, and the Park. All important affairs were transacted in concert, at meetings of the elders and representatives of the respective societies: the pastors and deacons were chosen by common suffrage, and ordained to the service of the whole union, though more particularly attached to one of the churches. In some respect, they appear to have formed one church, as it is not uncommon, in their church books, to designate the different societies, by "that part of the church" meeting in such a place. This association was for many years maintained with spirit; and contributed much to the prosperity of the general baptist cause. It has been said, that its object was to support the practice of laying on of hands; but this is taking [W. A. C. B. at the respective dates] too confined a view of the subject. The professed design of these associated churches was, to maintain all the principles of Christ's doctrine, enumerated by the apostle, Heb. 6:1,2. [W.A.C.B. 1688, &c. S.T.C.B. &c.]

SECT. 6.--The Transactions of the General Baptists in Kent, during the period between the Restoration and the Revolution.

The general baptists were numerous and flourishing in Kent, at the period of the Restoration [Supra, pp. 162, 166]; but were soon called to drink deep of the cup of persecution. In 1660, several of their most active ministers, and many of their pious brethren were imprisoned, in Maidstone jail. Towards the close of that year, they published "The humble Petition and Representation of the sufferings of several peaceable and innocent subjects, called by the name of Anabaptists, inhabitants of the county of Kent, and prisoners in the gaol of Maidstone, for the testimony of a good conscience." In this piece, which they addressed to king Charles, they appeal to the Confession, which had lately been presented to his majesty, for evidence of their loyalty and allegiance; and

take occasion to state more explicitly their free and full acknowledgment of the king's authority and dignity. They then draw this affecting picture of the hardships which they endured: "We, thy imprisoned subjects, have some of us had our houses broken open, in the dead of the night, without producing any authority from thee, or any inferior minister under thee: our goods and cattle taken away from some others, and yet detained from us: our bodies, some taken from our own dwellings, and others from our peaceable meetings." They state their claims to the protection of government, in their civil and religious rights; and declare that they decline the oath of supremacy only because it binds to obedience in religious and spiritual concerns, as well as in temporal. For, they frankly confess, that though they sincerely acknowledge the king to be the supreme governor of all persons within his dominions, both ecclesiastical and civil, yet it is only in temporal causes and things. "And now," they conclude, "having faithfully laid before thee our condition and principles, as far as they relate to magistrates or government; we, therefore, beseech thee, O king, that liberty may be given us to worship our God; and such bowels of compassion be in thee, as to give us such speedy relief as may be agreeable to the mind of God, which made the heaven and earth, which executeth judgment for the oppressed; which giveth food to the hungry: the Lord looseth the prisoners." Signed, in the name of the baptists, prisoners in Maidstone jail, by William Jeffery, George Hammon, John Reeve, and James Blackmore." What effect this sensible remonstrance had we have no information; nor do we know when the pious remonstrants obtained their liberty. [Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 22-26.]

Having mentioned this transaction, in which the ministers of several societies were engaged we proceed to collect such particulars as have been preserved, respecting the various general baptist churches in Kent, during this period.

There was a numerous and respectable society of this persuasion at Chatham, which had several active and acceptable ministers, and suffered much persecution. The facts are interesting, though we are not able to assign to each its exact date. On one occasion, several of the members of this church were apprehended, by means of a person named Stowell, a very officious man in affairs of this nature. They were put on board of a ship, with a design to transport them to America: but the wind shifted, and detained them in port so long, that the captain began to suspect that he should not be able to proceed on his voyage as long as they continued on board. He, therefore, landed the baptists: and the wind immediately changing in his favour, made sail and left them.

As Mr. Gamman, a minister in this church, was preaching to them one Lord's-day, he and his congregation were seized, and driven, like beasts, through the streets of Chatham to Rochester; where the men were confined, and the women and children left weeping about the streets. Mr. Gamman, opening a window of his prison, exhorted them to stand fast and be stedfast in the faith; and God would reward them at the great day.

Through the greatest part of this period, Mr. Morecock, a man of considerable eminence, was pastor of the general baptist church at Chatham. In his youth he had been in the navy, and was captain of a man of war during the protectorate, and for some time after the Restoration. In this capacity, he was so highly respected as an officer, and so well

beloved by his crew, that a present of ten thousand pounds was offered him to continue in his station: but, disgusted with the arbitrary proceedings of government, he resigned his commission, and stedfastly refused to have any connection with the court. After the Dutch war, he was successfully employed in raising the ships which had been sunk in the rivers Thames and Medway, to prevent the approach of the enemy to London and Chatham. He was offered very advantageous terms, to undertake the raising of some vessels that had foundered at sea; but he refused to leave his pastoral duties so long as that business would have required. When James II. ascended the throne, that monarch, knowing Mr. Morecock's influence among the dissenters, paid him great attention; and offered him any post that he pleased to accept: but he declined all his offers; observing, to his friends, that the favours shewn by the king to the dissenters were designed only to lead them into a snare.

Mr. Morecock commenced preaching before he resigned his commission as captain of a man of war; and frequently ascended the pulpit, at Chatham in his scarlet roquelaure. He suffered much persecution: but his influence, and the esteem in which he was held, greatly befriended him. When any of the neighbouring magistrates, as it often happened, was forced, by the officiousness of informers, to issue a warrant for his apprehension, he would privately send his own servant to apprize the accused of his danger: on which Mr. Morecock withdrew across the river to the house of one of his daughters in Essex. He was, however, fined twenty pounds monthly for not going to church; till he was exchequered for upwards of eight hundred pounds. His house was repeatedly plundered; and his goods carried off. To secure some provision for a family of nearly twenty children, he made over his remaining property to an intimate friend, who restored it honourably when the danger was past. The informers, exasperated by their disappointments, were highly incensed against him. One of them, named Hinton, often threatened, that he would send him to prison, and possess himself of his goods: which he impudently swore he would bestow on a loose woman, with whom he associated. Mr. Morecock, however, was preserved from confinement, though many of his esteemed friends were imprisoned; whom he frequently visited and encouraged. Going once, to see some of these sufferers for truth, in Rochester jail, he observed this Hinton confined there; and jocosely said to him, "Friend, I see that you are got hither before me."

After the suppression of duke Monmouth's rebellion, the court, irritated at Mr. Morecock's firmness in refusing the advances made to him, procured two witnesses, to swear that he had been an officer in the rebel army: but he proved, by unexceptionable evidence, the falsity of this charge; and thus escaped this base design against his life. He lived to witness the happy Revolution, dying August, 1693: and was interred in the general baptist burying-ground at Chatham.

Towards the close of his ministry, Mr. Morecock was assisted, in his ministerial labours, by Mr. George Saunders. He was fined for preaching; but survived the Revolution many years, and succeeded Mr. Morecock as pastor of the church. There is, also, mention made of Mr. Baker, another minister of this church during this period; but no certain account of him has come to hand. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 119-120, 109-112, 137, 35. *Protestant Dissenters' Mag.*]

In 1655, we left Mr. H. Denne at Canterbury, employed in "setting in order the things that were wanting" in the general baptist church in that place. Probably he resided there for several years: but we have no further intelligence of this society, till 1663. At that date, it was prosperous; consisting of upwards of one hundred members, zealous for the truth, and strictly attentive to discipline. During the period now under consideration, this church was grievously persecuted. Driven from their usual place of meeting, they were obliged to assemble for social worship in the recesses of the adjacent woods. But even, there they were interrupted by the constables, who took about thirty of them before a justice of the peace. The magistrate, observing among them a woman who had been his servant, said; "Mary, what are you among the prisoners? There--you may go." 'No,' replied Mary, 'I will take my lot with them:' and they were all committed to prison.

Notwithstanding these afflictions, the church continued to prosper. We have, however, no account of its pastors till 1681; when Daniel Saffery and Thomas Beacham were ordained elders: and Vincent Marsh, W. Huggett, and John Nutt, deacons. [Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 221. and P.I.]

An extensive general baptist church was formed, during the protectorate, on the coast of Kent, which included Dover, Deal, Sandwich, Folkstone, and Hythe. Its pastor, and, probably, its founder, was Richard Hobbs, a worthy, pious, good man. About the time of the Restoration, Edward Prescot, of Gunston near Dover, was associated with Mr. Hobbs in the eldership. The members were then numerous, and the cause flourishing: but the return of the king plunged them into deep distress; as they knew that the mayor and magistrates of Dover were eager to seize any opportunity of harassing the dissenters. The baptists foresaw the storm; and endeavoured to avert it, by a respectful address to their rulers; assuring them of their willingness to obey them in all temporal things; but declaring their resolution to obey God alone in all religious concerns. Perhaps this step accelerated their sufferings.

In 1660, several of the baptists were seized, in their meeting-house, and sent to prison: but, after twenty-four days' confinement, were admitted to bail. At the next sessions, they were forbidden to hold any more meetings in their own place of worship; but permitted to assemble, at stated times, in one of the parish churches. They availed themselves of this privilege for five months; meeting every Lord's-day at eleven in the morning, and continuing their worship to three in the afternoon; till the succeeding mayor revoked this indulgence. The baptists, convinced that they ought not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, ventured again to meet at their own place: but, on the first Lord's-day their worship was disturbed by the mayor, who committed four of them to prison. They thought it their duty to persevere; and, on the following Lord's-day, six more were apprehended, and sent to their companions. On the third Sabbath, only ten ventured to assemble, when the mayor came: and, ordering them all to prison, put a padlock on the door of the meeting-house. The next morning the lock was found knocked off, and thrown into the porch of the mayor's house. But, notwithstanding this bravado, the baptists judged it prudent to use every lawful means to avoid danger. "They met," says a contemporary writer, "with so much secresy, that it was hard to know either time or

place: sometimes, at one part of the town; sometimes at another; and sometimes in the country; one while at five o'clock in the morning; and an other while in the evening; and at uncertain hours of the day. So earnestly did these zealous christians labour to enjoy those means of grace, which we are ready to slight and neglect.

The persons who had been sent to prison were, at length, brought before the quarter sessions, and a true bill of indictment was found against them all. A few submitted to the court, several traversed the indictment, and the rest were remanded into confinement. Seeing no prospect of relief from their own magistrates, they addressed a petition to the king; in which, after stating their case, and reminding Charles of his declaration from Breda, they pray that they may not be interrupted in their worshipping of the God of heaven, as they were taught in his holy word: a privilege which they prized above all the world. They then conclude thus: " But if, notwithstanding what hath been and is desired, we shall be denied that which we humbly conceive the laws of God and nature do allow us; yet we shall, in the name of the Lord, patiently suffer what shall be inflicted on us. For the weapons of our warfare not carnal; but spiritual, and mighty, to the pulling down of strong holds."

Soon after, the Duke of York was sent to Dover, probably as governor; and these good people thought it prudent to present another address to him: which, as it is short, and exhibits some interesting traits of character, we venture to insert in the margin.* What effects these appeals to the higher powers produced, we are not able to say; as we have no further information respecting these sufferers.

["To His Highness the Duke of York: "Forasmuch as the all disposing hand of God' 's providence hath brought your highness into this place; we hope it is, that by you, as a fit instrument to so good a work, to deliver us his harmless people, and peaceable subjects to the king. And, inasmuch as what is done unto us is done in your name, we humbly lay before you, that many of us, inhabitants of this town, for the space of six weeks have been imprisoned, for no other cause but our peaceable meeting to worship our God; and thereby are brought into great straits. Some of our families being numerous, and their daily supply depending on our labours, our wants and straits are like to be very great, by reason of our present sufferings. And forasmuch as the like is not done to our friends in other places, but the King is pleased to protect them as his peaceable subjects; we think it hard measure to be thus dealt withal, our offences being no more criminal than theirs. The premises considered, we humbly intreat your highness to shew mercy to us, your peaceable yet oppressed subjects, in setting us at liberty; that the cries of our little ones and families by reason of our sufferings, do not provoke the great God of mercy and truth against this land of our nativity. And, if you please to answer our desires, we are sure God will reward you an hundred fold; since he hath promised, that he that giveth but a cup of cold water to any of his suffering people, shall not lose his reward. And you will engage us so much the more both to speak well of, and pray for you. In this resolution, we subscribe ourselves, in the innocency of our hearts, in the sight of God, From the prison in Dover, the 217th day of the 9th month, 1661. James Houson, John Finis, Simon Loveless, T. Partridge, John Hales, T. Williams.]

Mr. Hobbs, the pastor of the church, was soon afterwards sent to prison; but, his piety and good character procuring him favour with the jailor, he was permitted, occasionally, to visit his friends. Care, however, was taken, to confine him closely on a Lord's-day, lest he should aggravate his offence by preaching. When he was first committed, a gentleman, probably esteeming him an honest though erring christian, offered to procure him a conference with Dr. Hind, a clergyman. The doctor not being forward to visit the prisoner, Mr. Hobbs wrote him a very respectful letter; in which he proposed two queries for his solution: one respected infant baptism; and the other the forcing and receiving all persons, of every character, into the church; accompanied with his reasons for believing both to be contrary to scripture. Dr. Hind, probably not finding it easy to return a satisfactory answer, went, to the magistrates, and incensed them against Mr. Hobbs. They, learning the indulgence enjoyed by the prisoner, were highly displeased; and, sending the jailor to fetch him from his house, strictly charged that he should, for the future, be kept a close prisoner.

The church continued to increase; though several of the members forsook the baptists, and joined the quakers. This caused considerable jealousy between the two parties, and frequent literary altercations; in which Mr. Hobbs was often engaged, till 1673. It is probable that he died soon after that year, as we have no farther account of him.

But many years before his death, an event took place, which had a very happy influence on the general baptist cause at Dover. Captain Samuel Taverner, a respectable gentleman from Essex, had been appointed by Oliver Cromwell, in 1653, governor of Deal castle. While attending the duties of his station, he formed an intimacy with Mr. Present, the baptist minister. In that disputing age, the subject of baptism would naturally occupy their attention: and the repeated discussion of it at length convinced the governor that believers' baptism alone was warranted by scripture. Though this was a persecuted principle, every where spoken against, this gentleman did not confer with flesh and blood; but, following the dictates of his conscience, was baptized by Mr. Prescott, in 1663, at Sandwich, and joined the church at Dover. In 1665, he resigned his commission as governor of Deal; which, it seems, had been continued to him at the Restoration: and, removing to Dover, commenced business as a grocer. He was called to preach soon after he joined the baptists: and his labours appear to have been very useful. The numbers of the society continued to increase; so that, in 1667, the members were two hundred and forty-two. The zeal and ability of Mr. Taverner, probably, contributed much to this increase: and, in October, 1681, he was ordained elder.

No sooner was he placed in this important station, than he began to devise plans for advancing the prosperity of the people whom he was called to serve. He took a list of the names and residences of the members: and, considering the extent of the country over which they were scattered, and the great increase of their numbers, he was led to conclude that the interest of the cause might be better promoted, by dividing the society into several parts. On imparting his sentiments to his friends, they met with general approbation: and, accordingly, three distinct churches were formed. These were; the church at Dover, which retained Mr. Taverner and Mr. Richard Cannon as their pastors, assisted by Mr. Tomas Partridge as ruling elder: the church at Sandwich and Deal, which

elected Henry Brown and Richard Slaughter for its elders: and the church at Folkstone and Hythe, which put itself under the care of Messrs. Auther and Hadlow. The three churches, thus amicably organized, agreed to hold an annual general meeting, on the first Lord's-day in May, to commemorate their former union, and cultivate a mutual good understanding. These meetings were maintained for upwards of fifty years; not being discontinued till 1732.

After this separation, persecution continued to vex these churches. Mr. Taverner was frequently summoned before the magistrates; when he always bore an undaunted testimony to the truth which he professed. His enemies came with a false warrant, in 1682, and seized his goods and furniture to the amount of nearly one hundred pounds. Discovering, however, the illegality of their proceedings, he recovered the greatest part of his property. On another occasion, he was sent to prison; but his interest at court soon procured his release. It is, indeed, probable, that his influence and connections screened him, in a great degree, from the rage of his enemies: yet this did not cause him to desert his less privileged friends. His name stands at the head of a list of ten persons, who, Sept. 30th. 1686, a time of violent persecution, when the church found great danger in meeting for social worship, signed a resolution, importing that, in future, if any person should suffer loss, on account of having meetings at his house, they would, according to their abilities, bear equal proportions of the damage. The other subscribers were, Richard Cannon, W. Mellow, John Simpson, Richard Marsh, Cornelius Garrison, Henry Hobbs, Thomas Neale, Thomas Stokes, and Henry Spillett. [Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 151-160. Vol. III. pp. 104-112. Howard's *Seat of the Scorned thrown down*, p. 19, and P.I., from original MSS.] The general baptists at Bessell's Green and Bradburn appear to have suffered much for the truth, and to have borne it with great fortitude. They thought it their duty to maintain an open profession of their religion, by meeting publicly for worship, and leave the consequence to Providence: and they even judged those who advised them to more, cautious measures to be worthy of censure. In 1672, a member of this society was solemnly withdrawn from; and his crimes are thus recorded in their church-book: "1. For being an instrument of Satan, in labouring to make our knees feeble, and our hands to hang down, and to bide our light under a bushel, by creeping into corners, and meeting by fours. 2. For neglecting the constant contributions to the wants of the poor. 3. For slothfulness, in neglecting to assemble with the church. 4. For refusing to do his duty in helping, according to his ability, to make up the loss that sister Palmer sustained for the truth's sake." And, in order to encourage each other boldly to suffer for the sake of a good conscience, twenty of the principal persons of the congregation entered into an agreement, Oct. 28th. 1681, to bear shares, in proportion to their circumstances, of whatever loss might be sustained by any on account of religion; and to pay their parts within a month after the loss.

Their zeal and courage were frequently put to the test. Their venerable pastor, W. Jeffery, suffered much, with great pleasure and patience, in his Master's cause?: and his colleague in the eldership, Mr. John Reeve, was the partaker of his trials. The magistrates of Seven-Oaks, one Lord's-day, sent the police officers to the baptist meeting at Bradburn, when, it is probable, Mr. Reeve was preaching. The officers seized all the men in the congregation, and carried them to Seven-Oaks, where they were detained in

custody all night. In the morning, when the justices were assembled, they sent for the prisoners; and, after some little discourse with them, dismissed them all with hearts full of wonder and gratitude, the men returned to meeting house from which they had been taken, the to unite in giving thanks to God for this unexpected deliverance. When they arrived at the place, to their great surprise and joy, they found the women still assembled; who had not left the house, but had spent the evening, night, and morning, in fasting, and prayer to God on their behalf. So signal an answer to their supplications must have had a happy effect in strengthening their faith, and preparing them for future sufferings.

During this period, it is probable, both their pastors died; as they must have been advanced in years, both having signed the Confession of Faith, in 1660. Mr. Jeffery is said to have died, in a good old age; and to have been succeeded by his son, John Jeffery, as elder of the church, [B.G.C.B. Crosby, Vol. IV. pp. 97-100.]

Tradition places the origin of the general baptist church at Eyethorn, in this county, towards the close of the reign of queen Elizabeth, about A. D. 1590. For some time, the members of this society met for social worship in private houses particularly at the house of one of their friends at Street end. The owner of this house bequeathed a small annuity for the support of the cause; which, like many similar bequests, has long, been lost. In 1624, the number of the members was upwards of twenty; and, under many discouraging circumstances, a strict attention to discipline was maintained. For more than one hundred and eighty years, pastors, of the name of John Knott, all of the same family, presided, in regular succession, over this congregation. Most of the general baptist ministers, under Charles II., followed some secular employment: and several of the pastors of Eyethorn were blacksmiths. As one of them was busy in his shop, information was given him that an informer and his crew were approaching, to apprehend him. He immediately withdrew by a back door, and concealed himself in an old saw-pit, overgrown with the nettles and weeds. No sooner had he escaped, than his persecutors entered; and found his wife, with a child in her arms. The little prattler began, "Daddy is gone"--and would, doubtless, have discovered his retreat, had not its mother stopt it by a rude shake. While the informers were searching for her husband, Mrs. Knott prepared for dinner. They insisted on partaking of it: and she instantly offered them the best she had, waiting on them with the utmost complaisance and alacrity. This hospitality softened the hearts of these intruders, and they left the house without any further search; declaring they would, not do any thing to distress so good a woman. But though Mr. Knott was preserved at this time, yet, on another occasion, his goods were seized, and offered for public sale; but so much was he respected, that neither his neighbors nor strangers could be allured to bid for them. [Ivimey, Vol. II. pp. 217-219. Vol. I. p. 137. Another ancient and respectable society of general baptists assembled at Biddenden, a village near Smarden, in Kent. Like most other gathered churches, its origin obscure. Its most early records, that have been preserved, commence "the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month (December) 1648 and now lie before us. It must have been formed many years previous to this date, as it was then completely organized, and extended over several of the adjacent towns and villages.

On the day just mentioned, it was agreed, for mutual accommodation,* that the members of this congregation should meet, for public worship, and the administration of the ordinances, in three divisions; one at Cranbrook, another at Biddenden, and a third at Rolvenden: but that in "weighty affairs," the three congregations should consult and act as one: and jointly assist each other, cases of necessity, in supplying the wants of the poor. At this time, George Hammon and James Blackmore were joint pastors; and the members must have been numerous, as more than seventy remained at Biddenden; the names of whom are subscribed to this agreement.

[* The reasons of this separation, assigned by the parties themselves, were, "that the glad tidings of Jesus the Anointed may be more propagated--the people, on the first day of the week, conveniently meet together to edify one another, and to watch over one another--to the end, that the offices of Jesus Christ, as king, priest, and prophet, may be exalted, and the discipline of Christ in each congregation be executed--and that the members may communicate together in the breaking of bread." Bid. C.B. ad init.]

During the period of toleration under Cromwell, the pastors of this churches were diligently employed in preaching the gospel. Before 1657, the members had increased to upwards of one hundred and twenty. They were also zealously engaged in contending for what they esteemed the doctrines of revelation. Mr. Hammon, particularly, as we have already seen, maintained frequent controversies, both personally and from the press.

Soon after the Restoration, this society was visited by persecution: for, in 1660, both its pastors were confined in Maidstone jail; and joined with their brethren in bonds in the petition mentioned at the beginning of this section. When they recovered their liberty is uncertain; but the cause continued to prosper, and the number of members to increase. In 1678, they were scattered over ten parishes: and, it being found inconvenient to continue to act as one society, an amicable separation took place. Two distinct churches were formed: one of which continued at Biddenden, under the care of Mr. Hammon; and the other assembled at Tenterden, under Mr. Blackmore.

In a few years after this division, Mr. Hammon appears to have been called to his reward. The last time he was at a church-meeting was July the 5th, 1680: and, probably, he did not long survive. He died at Haseldon Wood, in the parish of Cranbrook: and must have arrived at a good old age, as he had been pastor over this society about forty years. He was a man of a superior character. Little influenced by the authority of doctors or priests, he was determined to think and act for himself. But, though this independence of disposition led him to entertain some singular opinions, yet he always considered the word of God as the sovereign standard of truth; and bowed, with respectful submission, to its decision. He is said to have acquired, by his own application, some acquaintance with the learned languages: and his works prove him to have possessed a shrewdness of observation and a closeness of reasoning, that well fitted him to shine in the disputing age in which he lived. Of his address and intrepidity the following anecdote affords a pleasing example.

In those troublous times, of which we are treating, when numbers of unprincipled wretches obtained an infamous livelihood by lodging accusations against their neighbours who ventured to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, G. Hammon was engaged to preach at a distant place. On his way thither, being overtaken by a violent storm, he took shelter under a tree, on the side of the road. While standing, a stranger, from an opposite house, mistaking him for a person of a different character, called out to him, saying, 'I am an informer: I hear there is to be a meeting this night, at such a place; and I am going to give information against the persons assembled.' Mr. Hammon, on hearing him name the place at which he was to preach, instantly replied, "I am a man-taker also, and am going to the same meeting." 'Are you so?' said the informer, 'then we will go together, and share the spoil.' To this Mr. Hammon assented: and they proceeded to the place of meeting, where the hearers were already assembled. After sitting some time, Mr. Hammon said to his companion, "Here are the people; but where is the minister? Unless there is a minister, we can never make a conventicle of it. I propose, therefore, that either you or I preach." Upon the other's declining it, Mr. Hammon said, "Then I must:" and, to the great surprise of his new associate, immediately commencing the service, he preached with such energy and effect, that the informer laid aside his profession, and became an honest man.

We have little further information respecting this congregation during the remainder of this period. They remained destitute of a pastor till after the close of it; and were occasionally supplied by the ministers at Rolvenden, or by Mr. Francis Cornwell. Being still exposed to severe persecution, in 1684 they entered into a mutual agreement to support each other by a joint contribution, according, to the circumstances of each, towards repairing the losses sustained by any member of the church from fines or indictments, on account of religion. [Bid. C.B.--Ivimey, Vol. II. p. 221.]

It has been mentioned before, that Mr. C. Blackwood, the clergyman of Staplehurst, Kent, in 1644, embraced the doctrine of believers' baptism. About the same time, Richard Kingsnorth, one of his parishioners, adopted similar sentiments. These united their efforts, and gathered a church at Spilshill, near Staplehurst, which soon spread itself into the adjacent parts. Mr. Kingsnorth, and most of their converts, were general baptists: but Mr. Blackwood held the doctrine of particular election. Mr. Kingsnorth, therefore, was ordained pastor; and Mr. Blackwood assisted him in the ministry. They laboured together for some time, with much harmony and success, until Mr. Blackwood joined the parliamentary army, and went over with it into Ireland; where he became very popular and useful. Mr. Kingsnorth continued his labours in this church till his death, in 1677; and appears to have been very successful. The church increased in numbers, and had many ministers raised up to preach the gospel. It appears, that at the death of their first pastor, no fewer than five of his sons were employed in that honorable calling. He was the author of two pieces: one entitled, "The Pearl of Truth found out between two Rocks of Error;" and the other, "Gospel Certainty of everlasting Felicity." In both these, he endeavoured to support the distinguishing, tenets of his denomination.

Soon after the death of Mr. Kingsnorth a division took place in this society, which probably had been delayed only through respect to his character. It appeared that an

unhappy difference of opinion respecting the "ever blessed Trinity" existed among the ministers and people. Some adhered to the original principles upon which the society was formed; while others embraced the novel tenets propagated by Mr. Caffin, which afterwards caused so much altercation among the general baptists. After many debates, a friendly separation was agreed upon: and Thomas and Henry Kingsnorth, two sons of their deceased pastor, W. Jeffery, and Henry Hillier, with several of the congregation, withdrew, and formed a separate church; which, for some time, assembled at Biddenden, and Frittenden, and afterwards at Headcorn and Biddenden. The ministers who adhered to the "ancient opinions," were, Daniel Kingsnorth, brother to their late elder; Richard and James Kingsnorth, two sons of the same minister; Richard Knight, John Austin, and Henry Snoad. These carried on the cause; and several others were soon after called to labour with them. We know, however, very little of the subsequent history of this church, though it still exists. [Ivimey, Vol. II. pp. 233-237, and Private Information.]

There was, also, a respectable general baptist church at Maidstone, over which Mr. Joseph. Wright presided, for the greatest part of this period. He appears to have left Lincolnshire soon after the Restoration, and to have settled in Kent. He was a diligent and successful preacher, and suffered much for his adherence to the truth; being confined for twenty years in Maidstone jail. During this imprisonment he watched diligently over the interests of the churches; and was a zealous advocate for the distinguishing truths of the gospel, in opposition to the philosophical notions of his former friend, Mr. Caffin. But their controversy will fall more properly under the next period. He practised medicine in prison, with considerable success, for the support of himself and family. We have no account of the state of his church during this period. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 116-282, and supra, pp. 183-194.] Many other general baptist churches flourished, during this period, in this county: but we have not been able to obtain any particulars of their circumstances. Besides the twenty churches gathered by the exertions of Mr W. Jeffery and his associates, there were numerous congregations, in various parts of Kent, totally independent of them, of equal, if not of superior standing. We shall be happy, if the communications of our intelligent Kentish friends enable us to resume the subject in some future part of the history to more advantage.]

SECT. 7.--Notices of the General Baptists, in the Southern Counties, from the Restoration to the Revolution.

In the adjoining county of Sussex, the general baptists were numerous, during this period; and closely connected with the Kentish churches. At Lewes, and its vicinity, they were estimated, by their enemies, at five hundred: and suffered severe persecution, though they used every honest means to avoid giving offence. On Lord's-day, May 29th 1670, they agreed to assemble for social worship: but that they might not expose themselves to observation, or excite the resentment of their enemies, they appointed the meeting at three o'clock in the afternoon, when all the episcopalians would be at church: and, to conceal the place, it was arranged that the friends should go singly to their usual meeting-house, and from thence be directed to another, situated in a private lane, at about a quarter of a mile distance. Two informers, however, observing several persons going that way, followed them to the place: and, having made the discovery, repaired to Sir Thomas

Nutt, a persecuting justice, and laid information. That magistrate, without any examination, fined the minister twenty pounds, and forty of the hearers five shillings each. Who the minister was, we are not informed but he was not in circumstances to pay the fine which, therefore, was levied on five of the hearers. Warrants of distress were granted to the informers, to levy the amount on the possessions of the accused; and the constables were charged. to assist in the execution of them. On the following Wednesday, they proceeded to their odious task: and robbed the unresisting meeters, as they called them, of property to three times the amount of their fines. Their shops were plundered of the goods on sale, weights, and implements off trade; and their kitchens of their most necessary furniture:--their beds and drawers were stript of their linen and apparel; and their cattle driven off their lands. These outrages were continued for several weeks; and the seizures were made with the most barefaced inattention either to the value or owner of the effects. From one farmer, they took six cows, which, at a moderate computation, were worth more than double the fines charged on him: and when the sufferer expressed his surprise, that persons acquainted with the value of cattle should make such unreasonable distress, the informer replied, "We take one for your sauciness, and another for our trouble." A person, who was not accused of being at the meeting, complained to Sir Thomas, that the goods seized did not belong to the persons on whom the fine was laid, and obtained this haughty reply: "If I please, I will levy the fines on you: and how will you help yourself?"

Chillington, a village within three miles of Lewes, witnessed the same disgraceful proceedings. Mr. N. Martin was convicted, on very slight evidence, of having a meeting at his house; and a fine of twenty pounds was imposed on him. On his refusing to pay it, six cows, two young bullocks, and a horse, being his whole stock, were seized, and driven off. He appealed to the sessions against the sentence of the magistrate; and, of course, his property was restored. At the sessions, such was the prejudice against dissenters, that he was condemned to pay a fine of sixty pounds: which, however, was afterwards reduced to twenty-three. But still resisting the demand, he was, committed to close confinement: nor could his release be obtained, though the vicar of the place, sensible that he had been unjustly treated, offered to give bond for the payment of the fine within three months. At Brighthelmstene the baptists changed their place of meeting and assembled in small parties. But they were discovered; and the house surrounded by Capt. Tetterson, the constable, and his men. Finding the doors locked, and having no authority to force them, he placed a guard at the entrance, and went to the magistrate for a warrant. When he had obtained one, he was admitted; but no minister was found, nor were the people engaged in any religious exercise. There was, therefore, no proof of its being a conventicle. But, some of the informers swearing that they had heard the sound of a voice, which they supposed was preaching, the justice ordered all the congregation to be brought before him. After having endeavoured, in vain, to inveigle them into a confession, he convicted them, on the evidence of the informer: and laid a fine of twenty pounds on the house in which the meeting had been held. The house belonged to a malster: and Tetterson, going with his gang, broke open the store-houses; and filled sixty sacks, each containing five bushels, from a heap of malt; which he sold to one of his followers for twelve shillings a quarter. [Crosby, Vol. II. pp. 244-257.]

Mr. James Sicklemore was actively employed, in the former part of this period, in promoting the general baptist cause in these counties. This laborious minister was educated for a clergyman; and, for some years, enjoyed the living of Single ton, near Chichester. In this station, he was diligent and exemplary. Once being, according to his constant practice, engaged in catechizing the children of his parishioners, he was led to explain to his pupils what their godfathers had done for them. One of his auditors, at the conclusion, ventured to ask him what authority he had from scripture for any part of his system: and Mr. Sicklemore, not recollecting any text to his purpose, silenced the enquirer by a warm appeal to the general practice of the christian church. This question led him to examine the subject; and, finding that infant baptism rested solely on tradition, he relinquished the practice, and became a zealous assertor of believers' baptism. This change in his views took place, in 1648: though he appears to have retained his benefice for some years afterwards; probably till the Restoration. But, as he disapproved of tithes for the support of the ministry, he gave away all his income among the poor. His labours were not confined to his own parish, but were extended to various adjacent places. He was very successful as a preacher; and the instrument of gathering several churches; particularly those at Chichester and Portsmouth.

In 1671, the church at Chichester purchased some ground, and built a meeting-house. About the same time, Mr. George Smith presided over it: a worthy minister, and one who suffered much for the sake of a good conscience. He was confined, for a long time, in Horsham jail, to the great distress of an affectionate wife and five small children. Two of his sons, William and John, became useful and acceptable ministers of the gospel. [Crosby, Vol. IV. p. 245, and Private Information.]

But the most noted general baptist church in Sussex, at this time, was at Horsham. It had been gathered during the civil wars, probably by Mr. Samuel Lover, who survived the Restoration, and signed the Confession of 1660. Some time after its formation, it was joined by the famous Matthew Caffin, a native of Horsham, who had been expelled from the university of Oxford, for embracing and defending believers' baptism. This gentleman, being of good natural abilities cultivated by a liberal education, was soon called to the work of the ministry. He appears to have been co-pastor with Mr. Lover for several years; and, succeeding him at his death, presided over this congregation through the whole of the period of which we are treating. His labours were assiduous, and his success great. He was frequently called to defend the principles of the baptists, especially against the quakers. These were then as much disposed to controversy as any of their contemporaries; and often sought occasions of dispute. A quaker once came to Mr. Caffin's door, and gravely accosted him thus: 'Matthew Catlin, I have a message from the Lord to thee'. "Come in then," replied Mr. Caffin, "and deliver thy message." 'I am come,' proceeded the quaker, 'to reprove thee for paying tithes to the priests; and to forbid thy doing so any more.' 'I think,' rejoined Mr. Caffin calmly, "I can convince thee that thou art deceived, and the Lord has not sent thee: for, I assure thee, I never did pay any tithes, nor am ever likely to be charged with any:" for his farm, was, as to him, exempt from tithes.

But more serious persecutions than these were his portion. He was five times committed to prison: once to Newgate; when many of his fellow prisoners died, and he narrowly escaped. At another time, he was confined in Horsham jail; and owed his liberty to the intercession of his landlord, Sir James Moreton. Of his other imprisonments we have no particulars. Both he and his friends suffered much from fines and exactions, under the conventicle act: yet the cause flourished, and the minister maintained an honorable character, bringing up a numerous family with great respectability. He laboured diligently in his own congregation, and frequently visited the churches in Kent, Sussex, and Surrey; many of which he had been instrumental in planting. [Ibid. Vol. III. pp. 116, 280. Vol. IV. 328.]

The church at Portsmouth, as has just been said, was gathered by Mr. James Sicklemore. Mr. Wentworth appears to have been the first pastor; but we have no account of him. He was succeeded by Mr. Richard Drinkwater, who was ordained in 1669: and, for many years, laboured very acceptably, and was blest with considerable success. He suffered much for the testimony of a good conscience, being imprisoned for eighteen months: but his piety, prudence, and good conduct gained him universal esteem.

Thomas Bowes, a person of considerable abilities, and an excellent preacher, was co-pastor with Mr. Drinkwater. Possessing property, and occupying some lands in Portsmouth island, he was much exposed to the attacks of the informers, who frequently drove away his cattle, and sold them, to support their debaucheries. He outlived his colleague many years; and continued pastor till his death. [Ibid. Vol. II. p. 137.]

The sufferings of the dissenters, in these parts, were greatly heightened by the intolerance of Dr. Ward, bishop of Salisbury, and Dr. Gunning, bishop of Chichester.--The latter signalized himself by his zeal. Many of his episcopal brethren were content privately to encourage the informers, and throw the odium on the civil magistrates: but the bishop of Chichester marched in person, at the head of a troop of police officers, to disperse the meetings of the schismatics; and if he found the doors closed, would manfully order them to be broken open with sledges: which once gave occasion to a wag in the crowd to exclaim, "What! has Peter lost his keys?" He once seated himself on the bench with the justices, at the quarter sessions, to see that no undue lenity was shewn to the offenders against the laws for the safety of the church. The chairman desired his lordship to give the charge; which he declining, received a handsome rebuke from the magistrates, on the inconsistency of his conduct with his character of an ambassador of the Prince of Peace. His zeal carried him still farther. He gave a public challenge to the presbyterians, independents, baptists, and quakers; appointing three days for the disputation. On the first day, mounting the pulpit, before a large congregation, he charged the presbyterians and independents, in very strong terms, with rebellion and schism; and would admit of no reply. The baptists, on the second day, were treated with greater civility. Probably the bishop re-collected his dispute with Mr. H. Denne, in 1658; and, knowing the strength of their arguments, though it prudent not to provoke them. On the third day, the quakers, observing the manner of his lordship's attack, prepared to repel it with his own weapons. They collected their friends, from the adjacent counties; and returned railing for railing, till they drove the bishop fairly out of the church. They followed him home; and one of

them, as the prelate hastened forwards, pulled him by his lawn sleeve, exclaiming, " he hireling fleeth; the hireling fleeth." [Calamy's Account, Vol. II. pp. 334, 672.--It is very evident, that the bishop's opponents were general baptists, as Calamy informs us that they agreed with his lordship about free-will, &c. a mode of speaking by which the calvinists frequently endeavoured to cast a slur on the character of this despised sect. Account, Vol. II, p. 334.]

We have traces of an ancient general baptist church at Southampton, under the care of Mr. John Sims, who was baptized by Mr. Sicklemore. It seems this gentleman had not been regularly ordained; and yet, at the earnest request of the inhabitants of Middlesey, ventured to preach in their parish church, as he was on a journey to London. This gave such offence to the presbyterians, who then possessed the benefices, that Mr. Sims was apprehended at Bridgewater, under the authority of the act against unordained ministers. His pockets were searched, and some letters, which he was conveying from his country friends to their connections in London, were seized. He was sent up to the parliament, in custody; and these letters forwarded, as grounds of accusation. The crimes laid to his charge were, the denying of infant baptism, and presuming to take a text, and preach before two presbyterian ministers. The government not attending to this important business with sufficient promptitude, Edwards thought it necessary to publish the intercepted letters, to warn the people against such dangerous sectaries. But, unless believers' baptism, and rejoicing that the presbyterians did not obtain the unlimited power they sought, were esteemed heresy and treason, these letters are perfectly innocent; and breathed a spirit of piety and true patriotism. [Edwards' *Gangraena*, Part III. p. 50, &c.] We have no account of these baptists after the Restoration.

There appears to have been at this time,, a flourishing general baptist church at Downton, in Wiltshire: of which Mr. John Sangar, who kept a grammar school in that town, was pastor; and Mr. Peter Coles assistant preacher. This society sustained its share of persecution. Mr. Sangar was much harassed by fines, and the frequent seizure of his goods, On account of his nonconformity: and Mr. Coles, for the same crime, lay several years in Salisbury jail. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 126, 127.]

In the neighbouring county of Dorset, the general baptist cause made great progress during this period; principally through the blessing of God on the labours of Mr. John Miller. This pious minister was born at Hinton-Martin, in that county, of a respectable family; and educated among the presbyterians. When he arrived at years of discretion, after a diligent investigation of the subject, he embraced the principles of the baptists; and became zealous and active in propagating what he esteemed the doctrines of revelation. A church was formed at Minthenton, where he had fixed his residence: of which he was chosen pastor. But his labours were not confined to his own congregation. Notwithstanding the severity of the times, he travelled much, preached openly, and was made an instrument of turning many sinners to Christ, and of planting many churches.

These active exertions naturally exposed him to great persecutions. He lay ten years in confinement; and hardly escaped a praemunire. In 1684, his goods were seized, and himself cast into prison. At the ensuing assizes at Sherhorn, he was indicted for eleven

months' absence from church. As there was only one witness against him, It was found difficult to prove the charge till a neighbouring justice, one of king Charles' poor knights, turned evidence. He was then convicted in the full penalty of two hundred and twenty pounds, or twenty pounds a month. He objected to the sentence as illegal; but was told by the judge that he might seek his remedy where he could. As Mr. Miller declined paying this exorbitant fine, his property was seized by the sheriff. Four hundred sheep, twenty cows, seven horses, and six or seven fatting hogs; all the hay, corn, and wool of the last year's produce; and even the malt and hops reserved for the use of the family, were sold, as forfeited to the crown. These depredations continued for four months and though Mr. Miller had regained his liberty, yet he durst not appear; as his persecutor, the justice, threatened to imprison him again, His eldest son so incensed the plunderers, by merely taking an account of what effects were sold, that a warrant was issued to apprehend him; and he was obliged to abscond. At length, two neighbours, one of them a churchman, observing the destruction that was making of this good man's property, went to the sheriff, paid the fine, and dismissed the officers, after they had seized and wasted goods to the amount of nearly five hundred pounds. During this pillage, Mr. Miller went up to London, and presented a petition to the king; in which he prayed, not for the restoration of what had been thus wantonly seized, but that the little of his corn which remained might not be sold, but spared for the supply of his wife and eight children; to whom the rapacious bailiffs refused provisions, unless they were paid for them. To this moving appeal, the monarch answered, with the utmost unconcern, "I have nothing to say to you: you must go home and conform." Mr. Miller went home: but not to conform. Finding no prospect of enjoying his property in peace, he sold his estate: and, retiring to a lonely situation, took a small farm, of thirty pounds a year, on which he lived undisturbed, till May 14th 1694, when he was taken to his rest. He signed the Confession of 1660, Some time after it had been presented to the king. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 121-123. Whiston's *Memoirs*, Vol. II. 574. There is abundant evidence, that the general baptist interest flourished much, in the southern counties, between the Restoration and Revolution: yet, though we have made considerable exertions, we have not been able to obtain any regular information as to particular societies. We are, therefore, obliged, though very reluctantly, to confine our account to the above hints.]

Thus we have endeavoured to collect the most material facts relating to the English General Baptists, during the gloomy period between the Restoration of king Charles II. and the Revolution which placed William III. on the throne. It has been seen that they experienced their full share of the distress which was then the portion of all who conscientiously dissented from the established church. The foregoing pages afford ample proof of the sufferings of one denomination of dissenters; and the storm involved all nonconformists. What, then, must have been the total amount? A catalogue is said to have been made, by an intelligent minister, towards the close of this period, of sixty thousand persons who suffered for their religion, during the reigns of the brothers Charles II. and James II., of whom five thousand died in prison. And, on a moderate computation, no less a sum than fourteen millions of pounds was extorted from them, by fines and levies. The reign of bloody queen Mary was innocent, when compared with this horrid period; whether we consider the number of victims or the distress endured. Numbers of dissenters left the kingdom, and retired into foreign countries: many respectable families

were reduced to poverty; and hopeless despondency overspread the nation. [Neal, Vol. IV. p. 554.]

Yet, in the midst of this gloom, if we glance at the state of the general baptist interest in various parts of the kingdom, at the Revolution, we shall see reason to admire the goodness and power of the great Head of the church, in preserving and extending his own cause, while the powers of this world were exerting all their strength for its destruction. In Lincolnshire, and the adjacent counties, new churches were planted, and the old ones continued to flourish. The apostolic Thomas Grantham was still actively employed in promoting that cause for which he had so long laboured and suffered: and his efforts were effectually aided by many promising young ministers, who had grown up under his care, and drunk deep into his spirit. John Denne, and his associates, in the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon; Thomas Monk, and many assiduous fellow-labourers in Buckinghamshire and its vicinity Francis Stanley, and Benjamin Morley, with a number of zealous coadjutors in Northamptonshire; were all diligently and successfully engaged, in their respective circles, in advancing the same interest. If we turn our eye to London, the view is equally cheering. The congregations had increased in numbers and in order; and were well supplied with ministers. Though Messrs. Lamb, H. Denne, Gosnold, Barber, Loveday and Clayton had been called to their reward, yet their places were well filled by Messrs. Plant, Jennings, Maulden, Russell, Marnor, White, Kirby, and various others. Those veterans, Messrs. Morecock, and Taverner, were still effectually employed watering the numerous societies in Kent, and in planting new ones: and all encouraging group of young ministers, trained up under their influence, stood ready to assist their efforts, and enter into their labours.

In the southern counties, our prospect is, indeed, indistinct and confined; but we can plainly discern, in various parts, general baptist churches, which, at the Revolution, were numerous and flourishing. From the whole survey, it is evident, that the walls had been built in troublous times; and that this denomination of christians had increased, both number, and character, during this distressful period. Indeed, at the era of the Revolution, the general baptists appear to have reached the summit of their prosperity: nor were their churches, at any other time, equally respectable for the number of their members, the soundness of their doctrines, or the regularity of their discipline. And though our documents are too imperfect to permit us to Calculate the number in England at this time, with any certainty; yet, taking those congregations and districts of which we have the most accurate information as fair specimens of the whole, it may be safely concluded, that, if the general baptists, at the Restoration, amounted to twenty thousand, they must, at the Revolution, have exceeded thirty thousand.

CHAPTER III.

CHAP. III. THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS, FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE CLOSE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

SECT. 1.--King James II. favours the Dissenters.--William III. ascends the Throne--Toleration, established.

The dissipated Charles II. countenanced the measures adopted against the nonconformists merely to please his clergy and parliament, and obtain money to support his pleasures: but his bigoted successor appears to have pursued the same course, with a steady view to his favourite object, the encouragement of popery. He hoped that these severities would force the dissenters to make a common cause with the papists against the establishment; or, that, by crushing the sectaries, he should gratify the clergy; and induce them to connive at the favours granted to the Roman catholics. In both these designs he was completely disappointed. The dissenters, so far from being disposed to form any connection with the papists, were willing to be deprived of some of their own rights, rather than share them with persons of whose principles they entertained the utmost abhorrence. And the clergy, when they saw James making such open attempts to encourage popery, united with great zeal, both from the pulpit and the press, in opposing it. Thus foiled, the king determined to try whether the dissenters might not be won by favours, to assist in overthrowing the established church. The laws against them could not, indeed, be repealed without the consent of the parliament; which, jealous as they were of the designs of the court, could not be expected: but James claimed the power of dispensing with the laws; and eleven of the judges had given their solemn opinion in favour of this claim.

Having obtained their sanction, he began to exercise his prerogative in favour of those who differed from the establishment; affecting a great regard for the rights of conscience, and ascribing all the persecution that had taken place to the instigation of the bishops. An office was opened, at which any person, for the sum of fifty shillings, might purchase a licence for himself and family; which stopped all actions depending against them on account of their religion, and granted them full liberty for the future, to attend what meetings they pleased. In order more effectually to please the dissenters, and humble their persecutors, in March, 1687, commissioners were appointed, in the several counties, to inquire what money had been raised, and what goods had been seized by distress, on account of religion, and not brought into the exchequer. The parties who had suffered persecution were summoned, to give an account of their respective losses; or, if they were dead, their relations were to appeal for them. "This commission struck terror into the whole tribe of informers, and their employers.

Judging of others by themselves, they did not entertain the least hope that the dissenters would not seize with avidity this opportunity of avenging themselves on their enemies. But the religion for which the nonconformists had suffered, had taught them to return blessing for cursing: and they nobly refused to appear against their persecutors. Their generous forbearance was warmly acknowledged by many leading men in the establishment; who gave the most solemn assurances that, in future, every kind of lenity and affection should be exercised towards their dissenting brethren, as they then kindly termed them.

April 4th 1687, James issued a proclamation, in which, after observing that conscience ought not to be forced, he declared, that it was his royal will and pleasure--that all penal laws against nonconformity should be immediately suspended--that his subjects might

meet freely in any place, and serve God after their own consciences; provided that nothing against government was taught, that their doors were open, and that the places were certified to some neighbouring justice--and that all oaths and tests required for holding places should cease, and all civil and military offices be left free to his good subjects of ever sect This declaration was received by the dissenters with jealous gratitude. They, doubtless, were happy in being released from the hardships they had suffered but they did not approve of the power of dispensing with the laws claimed by the king; and they feared the real object was to favour popery. They therefore rejoiced with trembling. A few of the baptists, quakers, and independents presented addresses of thanks to the king; but the wiser part enjoyed the indulgence in silence. Among the ministers who waited on his majesty on this occasion, we notice only one general baptist, Mr. Thomas Plant, pastor of the Barbican church; who, in company with several particular baptist ministers, presented an address, March 23d 1687, in which they said, "The sense of this invaluable favour and benefit, derived to us from your royal clemency, compels us to prostrate ourselves at your majesty's feet, with the tender of our most humble thanks for that peace and liberty which both we and all other dissenters from the national church enjoy." They concluded with expressing their humble dependence on his royal promise, to secure their rights and properties; and to engage his two houses of parliament to concur with him in this good work. These addresses, guarded as they evidently were, met with a most gracious reception at court; and were handed about as proofs of the attachment of the dissenters.

But James drove forwards his arbitrary measures with so much violence, and pursued his plans for introducing popery with so little disguise, that all the friends of liberty and religion took the alarm. Persons of all ranks and sentiments joined in an invitation to William, prince of Orange, James's son in law, to come over and preserve the civil and religious rights of the nation. That prince complied with the request, and landed at Torbay, Nov. 5th, 1688. misguided James, finding himself deserted by all his friends, and even by his own children, having previously sent his queen and her son into France, followed them, leaving the throne vacant. William arrived at London, Dec. 18th, and a parliament was assembled; which, on Feb. 13th, 1689, declared the prince and princess of Orange king and queen of England, to the great joy of every honest man in the nation.

King William III. was, by education and principle, a sincere friend to religious liberty. Could he have accomplished his wishes, all civil restraints on account of religious opinions would have been wholly abolished. But the clergy, when their dread of popery was removed, forgot the concessions and assurances which they had made to the nonconformists, in the time of their distress, and thwarted, as far as they could, the attempts of the good monarch to relieve them. A law, however, was soon enacted in favour of the dissenters; which, for one hundred years, was considered as the great bulwark of their liberties and rights; and has generally been distinguished by the appellation of the "Act of Toleration." It exempted persons taking certain oaths from the penalties for non-attendance at church and all other acts of nonconformity; discharged them from any prosecutions or informations for any such act which might be pending at the time of taking the oaths, and delivered them from the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. Dissenting ministers, on subscribing the doctrinal articles of the church of

England, were authorized to preach without molestation, and exempted from parochial offices. Their meetings, also, were protected from interruption, provided always they were held with the doors open. In this statute, it was expressly enacted, that baptist ministers should not be required to subscribe that part of the articles of the church of England which teaches infant baptism. [Neal, Vol. IV. p. 549.--ad ult. Appendix. No. 1.]

Thus a legal and constitutional stop was put to the sufferings of the dissenters; and though various attempts have since been made, by the sticklers for uniformity, both clergy and laity, to revive, in a greater or less degree, the spirit of persecution; yet they have always been crushed by the wisdom and liberality of the government, and the jealousy of those more immediately interested. Within these few years, certain magistrates having shewn a disposition to interpret some clauses of this act too strictly, and thus restrain the liberties of the dissenters, his majesty's present ministers carried a bill through both the houses of parliament to explain and fix the principles of toleration, and render the privileges of the nonconformists more secure and explicit. This act received the royal assent, July 29, 1812; and will, it is hoped, long remain a monument of the liberal policy of the present age.

SECT. 2.--Mr. Grantham's last labours and death.--Spalding Church.--Lincolnshire Association--General Baptists at Sheffield.

When we turn our eyes to the general baptists in Lincolnshire, and its vicinity, we naturally look for Mr. Thomas Grantham, the great support of their cause. We left him, preaching the gospel, and gathering a church, at Yarmouth, in Norfolk: and, at the Revolution, we find him zealously engaged, in the same sacred cause, at Lynn Regis, at the other extremity of the same county. Mr. James Marham, who had already been the instrument of introducing the general baptists into Holbeach and Wapool-Bell, on the death of his wife removed from the latter place to Lynn. He found here, also, an open field for his exertions, as there were none of his persuasion in the town. He, accordingly, invited Mr. Grantham to visit them: and that minister preached frequently in the Town-hall to numerous and attentive congregations. Pleased with the prospect, he encouraged Mr. Marham to hire a place, and fit it up conveniently for public worship. This being completed soon after the passing of the act of toleration, a license was procured, and the interest began to flourish. [*Theol. Mag.* for 1805, p. 111.]

After labouring some time at Lynn, Mr. Grantham returned to Norwich, to water the church which he had already planted in that town. His labours were great, and his success encouraging: many being induced to give themselves up to the church, and profess their faith in Christ by baptism. His meeting stood near St. Stephen's church, of which the Rev. John Connould was vicar: a worthy, pious, and learned clergyman; but sincerely attached to the doctrine and discipline of the establishment. Perceiving some of his parishioners drawn away by Mr. Grantham's ministry, and understanding that he had, from the pulpit, bid defiance to the church of England, Mr. Connould resolved to accept the challenge. He, therefore, addressed a polite note to Mr. Grantham, dated April 17th 1621, requesting a plain and positive answer to two questions: " 1. What authority, or what call, whether ordinary or extraordinary, have you, to gather a church or congregation, separate from, or

in opposition to, the established national church? 2. Whether you do own, and will undertake to defend, that the holy sacrament of baptism ought not to be administered to infants?" To these queries, Mr. Grantham, on the same day, replied "1. I do believe God's ordinary way of sending ministers, whom he hath first prepared, is by due election and ordination, by fasting and prayer, with the laying on of hands by the bishops or presbyter of his church: and it is by such a call that I preach, and perform my office in the ministry. 2. Seeing God hath put it into the hearts of our superiors to give equal liberty to us with our fellow subjects, I will make no challenge to disputation with my minister of the national church; yet I am ready to maintain, in a peaceable and amicable way, that sacred baptism does not belong to infants, by Christ's appointment."

Thus commenced an epistolary controversy, which was continued for several months; in which each party evidently exerted his utmost abilities to defend his own system. Mr. Grantham appears to considerable advantage, even when opposed to this able disputant; who frankly acknowledged, at the close of the debate, that he did not think so much could have been said on either side. The whole correspondence was conducted in the most friendly and handsome manner: the clergyman inviting the baptist to his house, and offering him the use, of his library; and the baptist consulting the clergyman, as his friend, in all cases of doubt or difficulty. After writing thirty letters each, most of them long and laboured epistles, they closed the dispute, Sept. 29th 1691: and the result was, as usually happens, each combatant professed himself confirmed in the truth of his own system. But, unlike the effect of most theological contests, it is evident, that their mutual esteem and friendship increased during the dispute: and that, at the close of it, each entertained a much higher opinion of the piety and abilities of the other than he did at the commencement.*

[* This correspondence has never been published; but a manuscript copy of it has been kindly handed to us. It contains 272 close-written quarto pages, large demy. At the close of the debate, some thoughts were entertained of printing these letters; but it was judged more prudent, at that time, to defer it. We cannot, however, avoid thinking that the sober, learned, and courteous arguments of the worthy vicar of St. Stephen's, would do more credit to the paedobaptist cause, than some of the late publications in its favour. As a specimen of the temper and style of this correspondence, we insert the two last letters, which relate to the printing of the controversy.

"Rev. Sir, "There is a report in town, that you intend to print our late disputation. If this be your purpose, you have my consent, so that it be done fairly, as I do not doubt of it. I purpose shortly to go into my own country; and therefore am desirous to know your resolution in this matter before I go. If you be not disposed to print, I desire to know your freedom, that I should publish this dispute. I hope it may be of good use, to beget a better understanding between the church of England and those of the baptized believers. I could be willing to confer with you about this affair, if you think it adviseable so to do. I am, Sir, Your loving Friend and Servant, THOMAS GRANTHAM. Norwich, Sept, 29th. 1691.

Sept. 29th. 1691. 'Sir, 'Whatever may be reported, concerning my printing the Letters which have passed between us, I do assure you that it is, at present, far from my thoughts. As for yourself, if you have any such design, I have nothing to say against it; but leave you to your own liberty. It is not because I am ashamed of the cause which I have taken in hand to defend; but other reasons, which, if I may have all opportunity to discourse with you, I shall be ready to impart. Pray, Sir, let me know whether I may be so happy as to enjoy your company at my house this afternoon, five o'clock; or whether I shall wait on you at yours; or shall or meet you elsewhere, at any other time: and, as it shall stand with my other necessary affairs, I shall be ready to shew myself. Your very ready Servant, JOHN CONNOULD.'

Mr. Grantham, it seems, attracted the attention of a dignitary of the established church. In a letter, dated May 10th 1691, he tells Mr. Connould, "As for the questions which you whisper to me, they do not astonish me; because I have defended my doctrine and ministry against your exceptions, which have been objected to me by others: and particularly by Dr. Lloyd, bishop of Asaph, in a very christian conference at London, which ended with much friendship."--It is to be regretted that no account of this interview has been preserved. C. & C. p. 33.]

Though the laws had put an end to fines and imprisonments for the sake of religion, yet the old spirit governed too many of the high-church. party: and Mr. Grantham, about this time, suffered much from the persecution of the tongue. One railed at him as a drunkard; while another revived the slander, which he had so ably confuted thirty years before, and said that he was a jesuit in disguise. Some called him an unclean person; and others asserted that he was a thief. While these calumnies were only thrown out, by the rabble, in general terms, Mr. Grantham, secure in conscious innocence, despised them; and calmly pursued the great work in which he was so zealously engaged. But his forbearance encouraged his enemies; and persons of a more respectable rank joined the cry. Mr. Toothby, who had been a persecuting justice, but was now out of commission, was very conspicuous in this dirty work: and was eagerly seconded by John Willett, the degraded rector of Tattershall, in Lincolnshire. Mr. Grantham now thought that the interest of religion called upon him to defend his character; and the malicious zeal of his slanderers soon gave him a fair opportunity. John Willett wantonly declared, in writing,, that he had seen Mr. Grantham stand in the pillory, two hours, at Louth, in the county of Lincoln, for causing his servant to fetch up seven of his neighbour's sheep, and brand them with his own mark. Proper evidence of this calumny being procured, Mr. Willett was apprehended; and carried before Thomas Blofield, esq. mayor of Norwich. Here the audacity of the wretch forsook him. He acknowledged, in the most humble manner, his wickedness; and confessed that all he had written against Mr. Grantham was utterly false and groundless. The mayor observed, that it was the foulest thing he had ever heard of: it was next to taking away Mr. Grantham's life, and deserved a severe whipping. On hearing this, the infamous slanderer threw himself on his knees to Mr. Grantham: and, with many tears and wringing of hands, supplicated his pardon. This worthy man, having fully vindicated his character, readily forgave his accuser: but the magistrate, though he praised the kindness of the prosecutor, directed his clerk to draw up a full and particular record of the confession; and ordered the calumniator to put his own signature and seal to

this memorial of his baseness. Having done this, he was discharged; but not being able to pay the customary fees, he was detained in custody. Mr. Grantham, pitying his abject condition, gave ten shillings to the officers to discharge him: thus exemplifying the precept of his divine Master, in doing good to those that persecuted him. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 261.]

Not content with these vile attacks on the character of this good man, plots were formed against him of a more serious nature. We have only obscure hints of the disgraceful particulars, and they appear never to have been fully known. Mr. Grantham writes to Mr. Connould, under date of May 10th, 1691, "I humbly thank you for your kind and faithful advertisement. Though I had no business of that nature appointed, I perceive some came with a bloody intent: God give them a sight of their sin. It is the opinion of some, that it is necessary, that the abuses which have been offered to us, and this design to destroy some of us, and therein the affronts which have been offered to their majesties' government, should be speedily represented to the council: and, in that case, I crave your advice; for I fear lest it should reflect. upon the governors and teachers of this city." To this, Mr. Connould answers, May 29th, expressing his abhorrence of all such attempts; advising the baptists to obtain legal proof against the guilty: and assuring them that the magistrates of Norwich would have both honesty and courage enough to do their duty. Mr. Grantham observes, May 23d. "I give you hearty thanks for your advice; but hitherto we cannot learn the name of the butcherly woman who should have begun the business." This is all we know of these dark transactions: but this is sufficient to prove the rancour with which the enemies of the truth pursued its friends, even when the law had taken them under its protection. [*Dispute with Connould*, pp. 36, 59, and 65.]

Mr. Grantham had formed a design to return, to Lincolnshire, in September 1691: but, probably, his wish to silence these calumnies, and protect his friends, might detain him at Norwich longer than he expected. He continued there till Jan. 17th, 1692, when he was called to his reward in the church triumphant. It is to be lamented, that no particulars of his last illness have been preserved: but, from an affecting speech, which he addressed to his weeping friends a few minutes before his death, we have pleasing assurance, that the gospel, which he had preached with so much diligence to others, supported him in those trying circumstances; and that the prosperity of the cause, to the promotion of which he had devoted his life, occupied his dying thoughts. As this document is interesting, we insert it below.*

[* "The Dying Words of Mr. Thomas Grantham. Spoken by him within two minutes of his death, as those whose Names are affixed hereunto can testify. Friends, I am in a very weak condition; and as this is the sabbath, with me it will be the everlasting sabbath: for I am going off the stage of this world. Therefore, I recommend you to the grace of God, that you would walk stedfastly in the faith; as, by the grace of God, I have done to this my life's end: for, by the grace of God, I have not defrauded or polluted any person in the world, as now I am going to answer before God the Father. I came not amongst you for riches or for honour; but to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; to spend and be spent for your good, both by preaching and writing: which words and works I recommend to you, to strengthen you in the faith which I have preached. In which faith I

live and die; which has been according to the gospel of Jesus Christ; in which I would have you stand steadfast to the end; not wavering, but "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." I desire you, for the Lord's sake, to walk together, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as Christ hath commanded you. "Then are ye my disciples, if you love one another." "Beloved, build up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost; keep yourselves in the love of God; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." As I have told you before, submit yourselves to the will of God, and to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: give honour to whom honour is due; and so shall no man have cause to speak evil of you. As for my part, since I have been amongst you, I have been made a scoff and a gazing stock of many people, which I freely forgive them all: and heartily pray that God would forgive them, and shew them the error of their ways: I desire that you would pray for them, and not seek any revenge. But, to be short, I must leave you: do not grieve nor mourn for me. Tho I die, I shall rise to glory; where I desire we may all meet, and see one another's faces at the last; knowing one another, and rejoice in glory: for I have conquered the infernal enemy by this faith, and have made the way plain and easy to me. And now I commit you to the grace Of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. Spoken in the presence of John Mingo, Andrew Pegg, William Sidwell, Thomas Ganmball, Thomas Miller, John Clarke, Alice Clarke, Ann Grantham."]

The malice of the enemies of this good man did not cease with his life: reports were spread that they threatened to abuse his corps. To prevent this, the Rev J. Connould, his worthy opponent, made interest to have the body interred in the middle aisle of St. Stephen's church. He read the burial service himself over the remains of his departed friend, in a most solemn and affecting manner, accompanied with many sighs and tears; and, on closing the book, added, with affectionate earnestness, "This day has a very great man fallen in Israel." Nor did time lessen the regard of this good vicar for the memory of his baptist rival:--more than eleven years afterwards, Mr. Connould died; and, at his own express request, was buried beside Mr. Grantham. [Memorial of Mr. Grantham, in the G.B. meeting-house, Norwich.]

It would be superfluous to endeavour to delineate the character of this celebrated general baptist. The excellencies of men of common size require to be pointed out by the historian; but the actions of such men as Thomas Grantham speak too plainly to need any comment. We, therefore, refer to the preceding pages; [Supra, pp. 128, 186, 193, 198, 204, 211, 216 and 224.] and are persuaded, that every impartial and discriminating reader has already pronounced him, as an individual, a christian, and a minister, a great and a good man.

His works have been noticed, as far as they have come to our knowledge, at the respective dates of their publication; except one, which was printed, in 1689, and called, "Truth and Peace: or the Last and most Friendly Debate concerning Infant Baptism." It is a brief answer" to a defence of paedobaptism, by a doctor of the church of England: which was esteemed by some so satisfactory, that nothing more was necessary on the subject till that was answered. "Several persons of quality and learning" had urged Mr.

Grantham to reply; which he did at large in this treatise. He has subjoined a Postscript in defence of the "manner of marriages among the baptized believers;" which appears to contain much curious information. [Ivimey, Vol. II. pp. 279-281.]

The death of Mr. Grantham was a heavy loss to the general baptist cause in Lincolnshire and the adjoining counties; as none of his successors inherited an equal portion of his spirit and abilities, though several of them were assiduous and sincere. William Pann, who had been his co-adjutor and fellow-messenger, survived him several years, and succeeded him 'in the care of the churches.

No sooner had the Revolution secured to Britons the liberty of conscience, than the general baptists at Spalding began to exert themselves to erect a place for public worship. During the trying period preceding, they seem to have assembled in private houses, as less exposed to the observation of their enemies: but, in Feb. 1689, they commenced their contributions towards building a new meeting-house; which they completed in less than two years. It occupied the site of the present building, and cost eighty-nine pounds.

Thus accommodated, this church prospered, and sent the gospel into different villages in the neighbourhood. They maintained preaching, for some time, at Moulton, five miles east of Spalding, where Stephen Maw, one of their "gifted brethren" resided: but he dying in 1691, the attempt was soon after relinquished. The scenes of their greatest success were on the sides of Gosberton and Fleet. At the former place, a congregation was established, and regular meetings supported; which was considered as a branch of the church at Spalding for a long time after the close of the seventeenth century. Mr. S. Phillips continued to labour at Holbeach till 1690: when Robert Vellem, of Fleet, became their regular preacher. He removed the meeting to Fleet; and laboured successfully till 1711; called away by death.

The peace of this society suffered a short interruption, in the spring of 1693. Thomas Lawson, their elder, had imbibed sentiments favourable to mixt communion; and had ventured to declare them. This alarmed the church, and considerable disaffection ensued: but the difference was amicably adjusted, at a solemn meeting held for that purpose, at Spalding, April 5th and 6th 1693: at which William Pann, the messenger, presided in Sept. of the same year, Israel Cave,* another "gifted brother," was called away by death; and, in Oct. 1695, their pastor, Thomas Lawson, departed this life. The loss of so many ministers must have been severely felt, and prevented their exertions for spreading the cause. But several young men were encouraged to exercise their gifts; and, in due time, called out to assist in the ministry: not a few of whom became useful and acceptable preachers. William Roberts, who was a deacon in 1696, was called to the eldership in 1699: and appears to have been a person of great respectability. [Burgess, MSS.] [* It is not improbable, that this person was the son of Israel Cave, who was ordained elder at Wisbeach, in 1655. See p. 141.]

The congregation at Bourn and Hackenby dropt their connection with Spalding, during this period, and became a distinct interest. Mr. Joseph Hooke, who excelled most of his

associates in ministerial abilities, and was diligent in his Master's work, was the pastor of it till long after the close of the seventeenth century.

Towards the middle of this period, the general baptist churches in Lincolnshire formed an Association, for mutual support and co-operation which, for many, years, was held, every six months, at Lincoln. The first meeting, in the Association-book, now before us, assembled July 16th, 1695, and was attended by seven elders; Charles Warwich, of Coningsby; Richard Sharp, of Lincoln: Ralph James, of North Willingham;

Thomas Ulliot, of Elsham; Leonard Isaac, of Tattershall; Edward Howard, and Thomas Serjeant; to whom, at their next meeting, were joined, Samuel Phillips, of Holbeach; Joseph Hooke, of Hackenby; and Edward Wood, of Alford. Several deacons, and private brethren, likewise took a part in their meetings, and signed their records. The churches which united in this association were, Lincoln, Spalding, Steninigett, The Isle of Axholme, then considered as one society; Marsh-Chapel; South Marsh, including the congregations at Alford, Walmsgate, and Croft; Tattershall, Bourn and Hackenby, Boston, Highcam, Coningsby and Elsham; all which congregations appear, at this time, to have been in a prosperous condition; except Boston, which was destitute of a minister.

It is not clear, whether this meeting was the commencement of a new union, or the continuation of an association which had already subsisted some time. It is most probable, that, during the times of persecution, such meetings were held, as regularly as circumstances would permit; and that, when liberty had been secured, they began to meet more statedly. This association being held in the county town, and during the assize week, was, most probably, well attended; and contributed not a little to the prosperity of the cause with which it was connected.

At the first meeting, it was proposed to call Mr. Joseph Hooke to the office of messenger and the proposal being approved, both by this association and the general assembly in London, and Mr. Hooke and his church having also acceded to it, he was very solemnly ordained to that office, Sept. 2nd, 1696, by Mr. Francis Stanley, messenger of the baptized churches in Northamptonshire, 320

At the meeting of this association, Aug. 9th, 1698, it was resolved, that "it would be a good improvement of earthly blessings, a comfortable discharge of our duty to God, and profitable for men's souls, seeing we are delivered from persecution, to raise a common stock for necessary uses." A chest was accordingly provided, with an aperture in the cover, and placed in Lincoln meetinghouse. It had four locks, the keys of which were entrusted to four brethren in different parts of the county; and the chest was never opened except at the time of the association. Into this, the representatives of the several congregations were to put the contributions of churches or individuals: and the whole was to be at the disposal of the association.

There were several general baptists, A.D. 1700, at Sheffield, in Yorkshire; who applied to the Lincolnshire association for assistance. Mr. Hooke, at the request of that meeting, went over to set in order what was wanting among them; and several other ministers visited them. This supply was continued till 1703, when they appear to have chosen Mr.

Edward Howard for their pastor. Ministerial assistance was likewise afforded to Nottingham and Sleaford: and the expences of all these journeys were paid out of the chest. [Lincolnshire Association Book.]

The Lincolnshire general baptists took a decided part against the philosophical notions of Mr. Caffin; which, at this time, distracted the whole denomination; but that controversy will be better understood, when we shall have stated their doctrines.

SECT. 3.--Notices of the General Baptists in the other Northern Counties, from A.D. 1688 to A.D. 1700.

The general baptists in Northamptonshire and its environs were prosperous and active during this period. Their churches were numerous, and well supplied with able and zealous ministers. They held regular associations among themselves; at one of which, about 1700, they protested against the opinions of Matthew Caffin, and broke all connections with those who encouraged them. Francis Stanley, that eminent servant of Christ, continued to labour among them till nearly the close of the seventeenth century. He ordained Mr. Hooke to the Messenger's office, Sept. 2nd, 1696: and, according to Crosby, died the same year, and was buried at East Haddon. His usefulness, therefore, continued to his death; and his last illness was of short duration. As he signed the Confession of Faith in 1660, he must have been advanced in years. Benjamin Morley, his fellow-messenger, who had laboured with him in the same county, survived him. His general residence had been at Ravensthorpe; in Northamptonshire; but, towards the close of his life, he removed to Winslow, in Buckinghamshire: from which place he attended the general association in 1698 and 1699.

Mr. Francis Stanley was very instrumental in promoting the increase, order, and respectability of the churches. He wrote a book, entitled "Christianity indeed: or, the well disciplined Christian the Delight of Christ: shewing how believers in Christ ought to go in and out, each before other, in gospel order: governing and being governed, as the children of one Father."

This little work contains many excellent rules, motives, and encouragements, for the due exercise of proper discipline in churches, on the congregational plan: and ought to be well digested by every member of such church; but especially by the elders and deacons. He has pleaded the right of ministers to a suitable maintenance with much earnestness of manner, and great force of argument: yet, though he was frequently employed in the duties of his office at distant places, he spent his own time and strength gratuitously in his Master's service. "Let no one," says he, "be so deceived as to think that I plead for private interest, or that it should be so done to me. For I thought I might speak the more freely, because I have not been chargeable to any, except in common entertainments: nay, if need be, I call give testimony that I have refused when it hath been tendered me." A noble proof of disinterested zeal. [Coningsby Association Book, 1696. Crosby, Vol. III. p. 127. General Association Book, 1702. Stanley's Christianity Indeed, p. 142. The running title of the last is, "The Gospel's Honour, and Churches' Ornament;" which Mr. Crosby mistook for the title of the work. The copy before us has no date; but, from some

passages, it appears to have been published soon after the flames and pestilence had desolated London.]

The general baptist cause at Lynn, under Mr. J. Marham, was violently opposed about this period. Mr. Grantham, as we have seen, founded the society in this town, under very favourable appearances. For some time after his departure, public worship was supported by supplies from the neighbouring churches. M. W. Long, from London, who had been one of Mr. Grantham's assistants, laboured afterwards more statedly, till he was called to another church; when Mr.

Audlev, of Fenstanton, preached among them for a few months. On his removal, Mr. Marham began to exercise his own gifts; and his labours proving acceptable to his friends, he was chosen the first pastor of this church. But dark clouds soon began to gather over the infant society. Some of the leading inhabitants of the town entertained strong prejudices against the new religion; and determined to crush it. The Act of Toleration had not repealed the Conventicle Act and, under the sanction of that law, the enemies of the baptists, in July 1691, entered informations against, them, before the justices of the county; who immediately issued a warrant, to levy twenty pounds on the house, twenty pounds on the minister, and five shillings each on the hearers. In vain Mr. Marham produced his licence, and pleaded the Toleration Act; all his pleas were overruled, and the distress executed with great rigour. Not content with seizing his property, they threatened him with more severe consequences. But Mr. Marham, having discovered several mistakes and falsities in the informations sworn against himself and friends, was advised, in his own defence, to indict the informers for perjury. These persecutors were now in danger of being caught in their own snare: but, having some powerful friends in London, they threatened, and perhaps bribed, Mr. Marham's attorney, till he neglected the prosecution. During this delay, they went to this unsuspecting baptist; and, pretending great remorse for harassing so good a man, signed bonds for the friendly termination of the whole business. When they had thus obtained an indemnity for their perjuries, they seized his goods, under the former sentence; and removed the cause into chancery. Soon after, Mr. Marham was summoned to London, to answer their bill of complaint, consisting of thirty-one sheets. This was followed by a tedious and expensive suit, which reduced this poor man to great distress and poverty. An application for pecuniary assistance was made, in 1692, to the liberality of the London baptists, both general and particular. But this appeal being either unsuccessful, or the malignity of the persecutors protracting the suit; in March, 1698, the case was brought before the Lincolnshire association: when it was concluded that there was "a great necessity to raise a speedy and plentiful supply for Mr. Marham: judging that his case concerns all." To expedite the business, the association wrote a letter to each church, exhorting them to act bountifully, and complete their collections in three weeks. They empowered two brethren, Henry Place and Benjamin Grantham, of Wisbeach, to ride round to the different, congregations, and receive their benevolence. This measure appears to have produced considerable effect, the Lincolnshire churches acting liberally. At the ensuing Whitsuntide, the general assembly at London strongly recommended the case to the whole body of general baptists; and there is reason to believe that the application was effectual; as the Lincolnshire churches, which had only suspended their efforts till they saw what the other

churches would do, never resumed the subject. Mr. Marsham appears, indeed, to have sacrificed his all in the contest: for, nine years afterwards, we find the same association resolving, that "he should have something collected to supply his necessities." [Theol. Mag. for 1805, p. 111-114. Lincoln Association Book, 1698 and 1707.]

The church in Norwich, founded by Mr. Grantham, declined much after his death. At the close of this century, it was in a weak and low condition; which excited the "sympathy and pity" of the Lincolnshire association, to which it applied for assistance, probably ministerial. That assembly, not being able to furnish any present supply, promised their prayers, and a recommendation, of the case to the neighbouring associations. [Ibid. 1700.]

Our information respecting the churches in Cambridgeshire, during this period, is very scanty. They maintained an association among themselves; and John Lacy appears to have been a leading man amongst them. He resided at Willbrun; and was, probably, pastor of the general baptist society at that place. He was advanced to the messenger's office, before 1697; and attended the general association in London, for several years, as representative of the Cambridgeshire churches, to oppose the errors of Matthew Caffin.

Mr. John Denne also continued his labours, in the same parts, till after the commencement of the eighteenth century; but we know little of his history. Perhaps his age might not fit him for distant excursions. [It appears, from the records of the church at Warboys, that he was baptized April 6th, 1645; and he was pastor of Fenstanton church before 1651: so that in 1700, he must have been nearly eighty years of age.] In 1699, he published a sermon, from Acts 10:36, under the title of "The Glad Tidings of Peace: wherein is manifested Grace, Mercy, and Peace, from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to all mankind." In this piece, he enlarges, and applies the sentiments which his father had advanced, in his little work, called "Grace, Mercy, and Peace;" many passages of which are borrowed by his son:--a sufficient evidence that Mr. Crosby was incorrect, when he said his sentiments differed from those of his father. We learn, from the preface, that some unhappy disputes had, for several previous years, disturbed the churches in the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon, to which he dedicated it: and that he had been obliged to defer the publication of this sermon, on account of the violent opposition that had been raised against the doctrines which it contains. These squabbles naturally tend to injure vital religion; and prevent the prosperity of the cause of Christ. There was, therefore, most probably, good reason for the complaints, which the author makes, of the decay of knowledge and love in societies and individuals. [General Association Book, 1697-1704. J. Deene's Glad Tidings] We have no account of the time of the death of Mr. John Denne, or of his friend Mr. Edmund Mayle, who appears to have been his colleague in the pastoral office for nearly half a century: but it is gratifying to find written, after the names of both, in an original list of church members, "died in the faith." [Warboys C.B. 1676.] There was, also, in 1700, a general baptist church at Ely, in this county, of which Mr. Clack was pastor. [General Association Book, 1700.]

The general baptist churches in Buckinghamshire, and the adjacent counties, flourished greatly after the Revolution. The increase of the cause made it necessary, in 1694, for the

society at Antersham to enlarge their meeting-house; and, in 1697, to elect William Charsley, as a colleague to their former elders, D. Jameson, and N. Bennett. The labours of these ministers were abundantly blessed; many additions were made to the members; and, at the close of this century, the church "as in very prosperous circumstances. [Amersham C.B.] There were numerous other churches, of the same persuasion, in this county, at the close of the seventeenth century: the names and pastors of several of which we insert, from the records of the general association; in hopes that some more interesting documents may yet be recovered. There was a church at Aylesbury, under the care of John Baker--at Winslow, which, for a few years, enjoyed the labours of Benjamin Morley, Messenger; and over which Robert Goodson, William Gyles, and Leonard Wilkins, presided successively, during this period--at Cuddington, under Clement Hunt--at Wing, under William Sturch--and at High Wycomb, which was represented, in 1700, by Thos. Tripp. These churches, and probably others, of which the very names are lost, formed an association, which usually met at Aylesbury. Mr. C. Hunt, of Cuddington, sustained the office of messenger amongst them; and his abilities and pious attention contributed much to the prosperity of the cause. He represented this district, at the London general association; and heartily joined with his constituents in opposing all innovations in the "ancient faith." [General Association Book.]

The flourishing church at Berkhamstead formed a part of the Buckinghamshire association, and entered cordially into all its views. At the commencement of this period, it had but one elder, John Russell; but the increase of members, and the large extent of country over which they were spread, soon called for more labourers. In 1698, Castledine was chosen elder; and, in 1700, John Cook and Thomas Basting were called to the same office. These good men had shared largely in the labours of the ministry for many years before they were regularly elected: and had been treated as elders by the neighbouring churches. They resided in different towns; and each laboured chiefly in his own neighbourhood:--Mr. Russell, at Berkhamstead; Mr. Cook at Chesham; Mr. Basting at Coney-street; and Mr. Castledine at St. Alban's. At these places, and, probably, at several others, they maintained constant public worship and prayer-meetings: and assembled for the transacting of the general concerns of the society at their principal stations in rotation. This church was highly respectable, and cultivated a friendly intercourse with the neighbouring congregations, of different sentiments: especially with the particular baptists at Hemel Hempstead, under the pastoral care of Mr. S. Ewer. The number of members, in 1700, amounted to upwards of two hundred and fifty; and, in less than six years afterwards, they increased to nearly four hundred: dwelling in more than thirty towns, villages, and distinct neighbourhoods. [Berkhamstead Church Book, 1688-1706.]

Though a few of the members of Berkhamstead church resided at Tring; yet there was, at this time, a distinct church, of the same faith, in that town: another also existed, in 1701, at Kempton and Luton, of which Joseph Garnett was pastor. In the same year, James Clark, and William Davis, attended the London association, as the representatives of a general baptist church at Rainham in Essex. The same meetings were, likewise, attended by Anthony Darvill, the pastor of a church at Branford, in Middlesex; and Samuel Cresswell, the pastor of a church at Nottingham, who brought a letter from the church at Wimeswould, in Leicestershire; under the care of William Suthenwood. [General

Association Book, passim.]--The foregoing are all the particulars we can collect, relating to the general baptists in the northern counties, during the period from the Revolution to the close of the seventeenth century. We trust some of our friends will favour us with more detailed accounts of many of these churches; as, doubtless, documents exist that would furnish ample materials.]

SECT. 4.--The Transactions of the London General Baptists, from the Revolution to A.D. 1700.

Mr. John Griffith continued to preside over the general baptist church in Dunning's-alley till May 16th. 1700; when he died, in the seventy-ninth year of his age. He had been devoted to God for more than threescore years; and upwards of fifty years pastor of that church; fourteen of which he spent in prison for the testimony of a good conscience. Through all this long course, he was preserved from bringing any reproach upon the ways of God by inconsistent conduct but, in all things, he was enabled to be an ornament to the religion which he professed. He bore a long illness, previous to his dissolution, with exemplary patience, and filial submission to his Father's will; and to the last rejoiced in full assurance of hope. His funeral sermon was preached, from Phil. 1:21, by Mr. R. Allen; and was afterwards printed, under the title of "A gainful Death the End truly Christian Life." Mr. Griffiths published two discourses: "God's Oracle and Christ's Doctrine:" and "A Treatise touching falling from Grace." The former is an exposition of Heb. 6:1, 2, which the general baptists, at that time, considered as a summary of "foundation principles:" and the latter, an attempt to prove that a true believer may be finally lost. They were republished, in 1707, "carefully revised, improved, and enlarged," by Joseph Jenkins.--Mr. Griffith's successor was Robert Jemmett; who, in 1696, had been pastor of a congregation in some part of Goodman's fields. [Wilson, Vol. II. pp. 178, 179.]

The church in Paul's-alley prospered under the ministry of Mr. Thomas Plant, till his death, in 1693. For some time after his loss, they were supplied by the occasional labours of neighbouring ministers; and then turned their eyes to Mr. Richard Allen. This gentleman, as we have already seen, was called to the work of the ministry, by the church in White's-alley, of which he was a member: but, at the commencement of this period, a difference in sentiment caused a separation from that people. The church in White's-alley held laying on of hands on every person baptized, as an essential principle of Christ's doctrine: Mr. Allen thought that it ought not to be made an indispensable requisite to church-fellowship; and scrupled not, on proper occasions, to avow this opinion. The subject was brought before several church-meetings; and, at length, a time was fixed for its final decision. The elders and representatives of the several churches in connection with White's-alley were requested to attend at the discussion: and, July 18th, 1688, It was solemnly determined that Mr. Allen should be suspended from being a minister in that congregation. but, though a regard to what they thought necessary discipline obliged them thus to dismiss this good man from their immediate communion, yet it did not lessen their esteem for his merits: and, in following years, they frequently availed themselves of his assistance and advice.

Mr. Allen's connection with the church in White's-alley being thus broken, he opened a place for worship at Turner's Hall, Philpot-lane. Here he gathered a small, but very respectable church; among whom he laboured for seven years, with great acceptance; and was highly valued by his brethren in the ministry. After the decease of Mr. Plant, an union was proposed, of the Barbican church, which had never practised imposition of hands, and Turner's Hall society, into one church, under the pastoral care of Mr. Allen. The motion was accepted by both congregations; and the union took place, July 12th 1695: which was kept as a day of solemn prayer to God for his blessing on the connection. It is probable, that Mr. James Pitman had acted as pastor, for a short space, at Paul's-alley; and Mr. Joseph Stennett as minister: for, in the first article of the union, it was stipulated, "that brother J. Pitman, and brother R. Allen should be elders of the united congregations: and that brother Joseph Stennett should be continued in the ministry." Of Mr. Pitman we hear no more. Mr. Stennett preached for this society till 1700: when he was respectfully dismissed; because he preached the doctrines of Calvin, and countenanced the schism of the friends of Joseph Taylor, from the church in White's-alley. He became an eminent and useful minister among the particular baptists. [Wilson, Vol. III. p. 239. Vol. I. 135-138.]

Early in this period, Joseph Taylor, and Mark Keyes, were chosen to assist Mr. Jennings in the ministry, by the general baptist church at, White's-alley; and their joint labours were highly blest. In 1615, the number of members amounted to four hundred and forty, in various parts of London and its vicinity; who appear to have been zealous, active, and honourable christians. But, in October, 1694, Mr. Jennings died; and, in a few months, was succeeded, in the pastoral office, by Joseph Taylor. At this time, Abraham Mulliner, one of their members, was acceptably employed as a preacher; and, in 1698, Joseph Jenkins, another promising young man, was called to the same important employment.

But the peace of this flourishing and happy church was soon interrupted, and its affairs thrown into confusion, by the improper conduct of its pastor. It had been observed, for some time, that his discourses had assumed more of a calvinistic strain than formerly: and some respectable members had complained of it, as a departure from the faith of the church: but these complaints had been quashed by the majority, who appear to have been much attached to Mr. Taylor. To their great surprize, however, on Lord's-day, Sept. 10th, 1699, when the church expected to join in celebrating the death of their Saviour, and all things were prepared for it, Mr. Taylor, at the close of his sermon, in which he cast heavy reflections on the church, told them, that the glory of the Lord was departed from them, and it was time for all honest men to leave them: that he, therefore, would have no more communion with them; but would preach at Devonshiresquare the next Lord's-day; to which place he invited the members and hearers to follow him. Accordingly, on the following Lords-day morning, he preached at Devonshiresquare; and, in the afternoon, at Loriner's-hall; whither he was followed by many of the congregation from White's-alley: whom he declared to be a true church; and, assuming the office of pastor over them, administered the Lord's supper among them.

The church at White's-alley being thus miserably torn in pieces, those that remained acted with a prudent firmness. They called a church-meeting, on the Tuesday following, at

which they resolved "to continue together, and endeavour to promote the honour and glory of God in that place:" and nominated a committee to provide a suitable supply of ministers. They agreed, also, to recall Mr. Mulliner, who was then labouring at Chichester, to assist his own friends. But suffering, as they conceived, from the effects of novel opinions, they required him to state his sentiments on the principal doctrines that distinguished the general baptists, previous to his coming amongst them. This he did to their satisfaction; and, soon arriving in London, was very instrumental in preserving the church from dissolution.

Having thus provided for their own necessities, they prepared to proceed against the schismatics. They invited Mr. Morley, the messenger, to assist them with his presence and advice; and requested Mr. Pigott, Mr. Allen, and Dr. Russell, the pastors of the churches in Hart-street, Barbican, and at High Hall, with six principal members of each church, to attend their meetings on this unpleasant business. Thus supported, they proceeded to a solemn investigation of the conduct of their late elder, and his abettors. In the course of this examination, it was clearly proved, that this unhappy man had lived in habits of gross immorality: and he was obliged to confess, that he had taken these disorderly steps, in order to prevent the church from enquiring into his conduct. A sentence of excommunication was, therefore, passed against him, with the full approbation of all the churches which had assisted in the proceedings: and, after proper admonition, the same method was adopted towards his adherents. These called themselves the church; and affected to despise the acts of their former associates: but Mr. Taylor did not continue long with them. The particular baptists, when his real character was discovered, gave him no countenance; though they patronized the party that separated with him, which the general baptists refused to acknowledge as a church of Christ. After these distressing transactions, the church at White's-alley recovered its peace: and Mr. Mulliner laboured amongst them with diligence and success. In 1703, he was unanimously chosen to the office of pastor over this society, which he filled, with great credit and usefulness, for more than thirty-six years. [White's Alley C.B.]

Mr. J. Maulden presided over the church in Goodman's fields through the whole of this period. It appears to have been a season of peace to that society, in which religion probably prospered without noise or ostentation; which, therefore, afforded few particulars for the notice of the historian: and the records of their more private transactions are unhappily lost. This, likewise, was apparently the case with the church at High Hall, under Dr. Russell, of which, if we except the disputes in which the Doctor was engaged, we have no information that belongs to this period; beyond the close of which he presided over that congregation.

Mr. G. White laboured amongst the general baptists at Dockhead, for several years, before he was chosen to the pastoral office. He was, however, solemnly ordained, Feb. 13th, 1693, with the full approbation of the congregations in connection with them. Previous to this, the church had left Dockhead; and built themselves a new meeting-house, in Fair-street, Horsley-Down. This building cost upwards of two hundred pounds: which appears to have been cheerfully raised, in a few months, by the free-will offerings of the members. The society took possession of this meeting-house in Sept. 1692, and

was afterwards designated as the church in Fairstreet. Towards the close of this period, Mr. N. Foxwell, who had been pastor of the general baptist church in Norwich, coming up to London, joined this church; and assisted Mr. White in the work of the ministry. [Shad Thames, C.B.]

William Marnor, the pastor of the church in the Park, Southwark, died July 16th, 1601., and was succeeded by William Brown. This minister was pastor when Capt. Pierce Johns so liberally endowed this and several sister churches: and, as this society obtained an equal share with other flourishing and numerous churches, it is probable that it was then in circumstances of similar prosperity.--Of the church Goswell-street we have no particulars, except that it continued under the care of Mr. Thomas Kirby: and, probably was numerous, as it enjoyed an equal share in the endowment to which we have just alluded.

The munificent patron of the general baptists, on this occasion, was Capt. Pierce Johns, a native of Penzance, in Cornwall; and a mariner by profession. When retired from business, he settled at Mile End Green, near Stepney; and was a member of the church in White's-alley. In 1698, he invested two farms in Essex, one called Berry Farm, near Rumford; and the other, Mountsale Farm, near Southminster, in the hands of ten trustees, chosen out of the several churches, in London, belonging to the Union already described. The instrument was dated July 7th, 1698, and directed, that, after the paying of fifty pounds yearly to his widow, during her life, fifteen pounds yearly to the support of the travelling ministers or messengers from the London general assembly, five pounds yearly to the general baptist church at Norwich, and five pounds yearly to the church in Dunning's Alley, the remainder of the rents and profits arising from these estates should be paid to the ministers and poor of the general baptist churches in White's-alley, Goswellstreet, Fair-street, Goodman's fields, and the Park, "in such sort, manner, or proportion, as the majority of the trustees shall think fit; consideration and respect being had to their several slates and conditions in the world." This endowment is still enjoyed by these churches; and, from the advanced value of landed property, the annual dividend is now considerable. [Pierce John's Trust Deed--In a subsequent deed, dated July 30th, 1698, the Donor directed, that eight pounds yearly should first be given to each of the five churches, and the remainder after that and the other annuities had been paid, should be distributed at the discretion of the trustees, to the minister and the poor of the same five churches. This liberal old sailor appears to have been a staunch general baptist. We find his signature to the proceedings of only one church meeting: the last minute of which is: "Brother Pierce Johns having declared his grievance, that brethren of the particular persuasion do preach here--it was agreed, that the matter be referred to the next church meeting." The business however was never resumed till after Mr. Taylor's expulsion. W.A.C.B. Oct. 19th, 1696.]

During, this, period, the churches to which Capt. Johns was so liberal, gave rise to another interest. The meetinghouses belonging to the five congregations were all situated, either in the east of London, or in the borough of Southwark; but many of the members resided towards the opposite extremity of the metropolis. As a regular attendance at their own places of worship formed one commendable part of the character of these old

general baptists, distance of place became a serious inconvenience. They felt also a laudable wish "to promote the preaching of the gospel in the western parts of the suburbs of London." For these reasons, they sought for a convenient place; and, at a meeting of the representatives of the five churches, held at White's-alley, Nov. 5th, 1691, it was resolved to open a place of worship at the upper end of Bow-street, near Hart-street, Covent Garden. One of their friends was appointed to provide suitable preachers: and the ministers of the several churches were desired to give what encouragement they could to this attempt, without neglecting their own places. The members who attended at Hart-street were to continue in communion with the respective churches to which they had previously belonged: and those whom it should please God "to bring over to the faith there," were to sit down with such of the five congregations as they should choose, till they could be formed into a regular church. This was the commencement of the society in Hart-street: and, in a few months, there was such an appearance of success, that the elders and representatives of the five congregations agreed, April 12, 1692, "that it should be set down as a congregation, and be a sixth part in their community." Twenty-one of the members at White's-alley were dismissed, to form a part of this new interest: and, though we have no information of the number of members who left the other four churches; yet, if it bore any proportion to those from White's-alley, this society, even at its formation, must have been, numerous.

The harmony between this infant church, and those from which it had been collected, was of very short duration. Early in 1693, the congregation in Hart-street admitted persons to communion with them, without the previous imposition of hands. This being contrary to one of the foundation, principles of the five churches, gave great offence. Messengers were sent from White's-alley, to endeavour to convince them of their heresy: or, if they failed in that, to invite those who had gone from that church to return to the communion of their former associates. But their interference appears to have produced no effect: and, from that time, the society in Hart-street ceased to be considered a part of the union.

Thus, left to their own resources, they soon called Mr. John Piggott, one of their members, who had for some time preached occasionally, to be their pastor. He had been a member of the church in Good man's-fields; was a schoolmaster by profession; and in habits of intimacy with Mr. Joseph Stennett. Possessing good natural parts, which he had assiduously cultivated from his infancy with a view to the work of the ministry, and being under the influence of genuine piety, he became eminent and useful. For several years the congregation flourished under his care and the most cordial affection subsisted between the pastor and his flock. That this church was highly respectable, may be inferred, from its being chosen, by the congregation in White's-alley, in conjunction with the churches at Barbican and High Hall, to assist them in the business of Joseph Taylor.

Towards the close of the period now under review, an event occurred in this church which, excited considerable attention. Mr. John Pilkington, who had been educated among the papists in the English seminary at Lisbon, imbibed such a dread of the protestant heresy, as he was taught to call it, that he determined to turn monk. Being disappointed in this design by the interference of his friends, he returned to England in disgust. Here he was led, by degrees, to examine the doctrines of the national church; and

spent some time at Oxford. But neither the promises of preferment, made to him by the dignitaries of the establishment; nor the civilities lavished upon him at the university, could subdue his prejudices. Persuaded that there here was no salvation out of the catholic church, he determined to sacrifice every thing rather than risk his eternal felicity. He, therefore, reconciled himself to the papists; did penance for his apostacy, by travelling on foot from London to Holywell, in Wales; and then, going over to the continent, entered, as a Benedictine monk, into the English monastery of St. Edmund's, at Paris. Being appointed to officiate as secretary, he obtained an intimate acquaintance with all the proceedings of the pretended saints who dwelt in the monastery. The discord, pride, intemperance, lust, and almost every other species of vice, which reigned amongst them, disgusted his soul and opened his eyes. He was obliged to suspect that a religion, practised under such abominable hypocrisy, could not proceed froth a holy God. He determined, at length, to read his bible; and to receive nothing as truth that was not taught in it. He soon found that popery was inconsistent with this sacred rule: and, after examining the church of England, and the various denominations of dissenters, he rested finally with the general baptists: believing that that their doctrines and practices were the most consistent with the oracles of truth. Under this conviction, he offered himself, as a candidate for fellowship, to the church in Hart-street. Mr. Piggott appears to have been laudably cautious in examining the sincerity of his professions: and, when he had obtained satisfaction to his own mind, brought, the case before the church, at a numerous meeting, May 28th, 1699. Mr. Pilkington attended, go give a public account of his experience, and to renounce popery before the church. After introducing the business, Mr. Piggott took an opportunity of addressing the church, and the candidate, in this impressive manner. "And now, sirs, let me intreat you to banish from your minds all prejudice and prepossessions, and impartially attend to what the candidate will presently pronounce. Let me beseech you to put on the bowels of mercy: do not usurp the authority of God, and pretend to search his heart. For my own part, charity obliges me to believe that he is sincere: my blessed Lord having left me no other rule to judge of the goodness or badness of tree, but by its fruits." " And now, Mr. Pilkington, I charge you, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, and in the presence of this numerous auditory, that you speak nothing but the truth. if you are conscious to yourself of any base ends in the recantation you are come to make, confess, and give glory to God: for that God whom we serve, and under whose banner you desire to be enrolled, cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked. Sir, you and I must shortly appear before the Judge of the quick and the dead: and, if you should be insincere, I, that now exhort and admonish you, must be a swift witness against you at the great assize. I call God to record this day, that I am clear of your blood; and I call every one in this place to witness the solemn charge I have given to you. If, therefore, you are sincere, (of which I would not admit a doubt) go on, by the grace of God, to pronounce your narrative and recantation."

After this solemn admonition, Mr. Pilkington read, before the whole assembly, an account of his life, and a recantation of the errors of popery; which gave such satisfaction to the church, that he was admitted a member, and baptized by Mr. Piggott.--We know nothing further respecting this proselyte, except that he, with five others, signed the decision of the church, in the case of the division in White's-alley.

The harmony of this society was soon afterwards interrupted. Mr. Piggott, who, like his friend, Mr. Stennett, had long discovered a bias towards calvinism, seems, about this time, to have taken a more decided part; and to have openly endeavoured to introduce those tenets into the church. This attempt caused dissatisfaction and disputes in the society; which increasing, Mr. Piggott and a considerable number of the members who adhered to him, withdrew from the church in Hart-street: and, taking a meeting-house in Little Wild-street, laid the foundation of the particular baptist church in that place which still exists. The members who remained at Hartstreet, and preserved their ancient faith, applied to their old friends in White's-alley for assistance; and were served in the ministry, in succession, by N. Foxwell, Joseph Jenkins, Benj. Ingram, and James Smith; till 1738, when the church was dissolved. [White's-alley C.B. Wilson, Vol. IV. pp. 11-16. Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 353-355.--IV. Appendix No. II.--IV. p. 315.]

Through the whole of this period, the general baptists held general assemblies regularly in London; which consisted of the ministers and representatives of the London churches, the messengers of the various country associations, and the ministers of individual country churches. The unhappy disputes which, at this time, distracted the whole body of this denomination, occupied, in a great measure, the attention of the assembly. These disputes also gave rise to another meeting, which, in 1697, under the name of the general association., was established in London; and met, for several years, at White's-alley. But we shall find another occasion to treat of these assemblies; and shall, therefore, conclude our account of the London general baptists, during this period, with a few hints respecting two persons of some note amongst them, who have not yet fallen under our notice.

Mr. Francis Smith was, for many years, an active and useful general baptist. He was a respectable bookseller and publisher. The earliest mention of him, that we have seen, is in the title of Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*; in the publishing of which he joined with S. Dagnall of Aylesbury. He signed the Confession of Faith of 1660; and the Apology, published the year following, on account of Venner's insurrection. We have not been able to discover that he was the pastor of any church; but, in 1672, he had been a regular preacher for twenty years. Previous to the Restoration, he published an excellent little piece, which he called, "Symptoms of Growth and Decay in Godliness: in Eighty Signs of a living and dying Christian; with the Causes of Decay, and Remedies for Recovery." Of this, he printed a second edition, enlarged,* in 1672, which he dedicated to Sir Thomas Foster; as a token of gratitude for the friendly assistance and Protection which he had received from that gentleman. [* This Edition is recommended by four eminent general baptist ministers, in this official manner. "IMPRIMATUR; W. Jeffery, Benj. Morley, Jos. Wright, Thos. Monk." This license is printed on the back of the title-page.] During all the period between the Restoration and the Revolution, Mr. Smith was harassed with continual persecutions, by the crown, or some of its venal officers. It was not, indeed, his religion; but his patriotism that caused his principal sufferings. He published books that cherished those sentiments of constitutional liberty, which were directly opposed to the arbitrary principles of the Stuarts. His treatment was extremely rigorous. He suffered many imprisonments; which were, sometimes, protracted for months, under circumstances of peculiar strictness and severity. It was the usual practice, with the agents of government, to seize his books as seditious or unlicensed; and, by

defacing the print, render them unsaleable: then immediately to reprint the same books with his name as publisher, and sell them for their own profit. Sometimes they seized his books, under these pretences, and handed them for sale, uninjured, to their own agents. They frequently arrested his person, or drove him, for fear of apprehension, from his business and his shop, to the great detriment of his circumstances. He was frequently carried before the infamous judge Jeffreys; and felt, on several occasions, the whole weight of his fury. In the twenty years preceding 1680, he estimates his "public losses and apparent damages" at upwards of fourteen hundred pounds.*

[* In 1680, Mr. Smith published, in a folio pamphlet, "An account of the injurious proceedings, of Sir. George Jeffreys, Knight, late Recorder of London, against Francis Smith, &c." from which we have collected many of the above particulars. The treatment which this patriotic bookseller received from the infamous Jeffreys, in the business that occasioned this publication, was perfectly consistent with his character. Mr. Smith had reprinted, with a few observations, an Act of Common Council, formerly made for restraining the expences of the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and other city officers. For this, he was indicted, as seditiously intending to disturb the peace of the kingdom, and bring the magistracy into contempt. He found bail to appear at the sessions, held Sept 8th. 1680: when the bill was thrown out by the grand jury. The complaint ought, of course, to have been dismissed: but the sessions being adjourned to the 16th, Jeffreys still held Mr. Smith to bail. When the court sat again, he directed the same indictment to be laid before the grand jury: when to his great vexation, it was again thrown out. He used many hard and reproachful terms to the jurors, refused to accept their verdict, and sent them back to reconsider it. After a decent interval, they returned into court, and a third time delivered the same verdict. This enraged Jeffreys; who breaking out into the most abusive language, ordered the bar to be cleared, and made the jurors stand forward; and each, in answer to his name, repeat his verdict. They all confirmed their former judgment: and sir George, foaming with rage, told them, they were perjured; and that it was impossible for God from heaven to pardon their perjury. The jurors heard his invectives in silence; and with dignified contempt withdrew from the court. Jeffreys then turning to Mr. Smith, endeavoured, by praising his ingenuous looks, and promising him lenity, to induce him to acknowledge [the fact. But Mr. S. who had good reason perfectly to know the character of the recorder, replied, " Sir, my ingenuousness hath already experienced the reward of your severity: and besides, I know no law commands me to accuse myself; neither shall I. The jury have done like true Englishmen, and worthy citizens; blessed be God for such a just jury!" Incensed by this bold speech, the judge, in open defiance of the law, ordered Mr. S. into custody, till he found security for his good behaviour and appearance at the next sessions: when, as none came forwards, to accuse him, he was discharged by proclamation.]

But his sufferings were not all occasioned by his political heresies. In 1671, he had warrants out against him, for being present at religious meetings, to the amount of one-hundred and forty pounds: by which he was obliged to abandon his trade for six months, and remove his goods in the night. To one meeting, at which he and several others were apprehended, the justice who headed the informers brought a cart, and proper workmen; and carried off, for his own use, a large gallery, with all the seats and forms in the place.

In 1693, Mr. Smith was again in confinement, on a religious account; and partook of the collections made for prisoners at White's-alley. Such continued persecutions reduced this suffering man to great difficulties. In March, 1689, he presented a request for pecuniary assistance, to the church in White's-alley: stating that, in addition to the loss he sustained by his enemies, he had been injured by his friends; having never been remunerated for several pieces, which he had formerly printed, for the general benefit of the baptized churches. When those who have generously stepped forwards in aid of a common cause are left to bear the burden alone, it reflects no small disgrace on their associates. It gives us pleasure, however, to add, that, on the settlement of the government, the friends of the Revolution did not forget it a man, who had suffered so much in the cause of civil and religious liberty. He obtained an honourable station under king William: and the close of his life appears to have been tranquil. But this tranquillity was very short; as he died Dec. 22d. 1691; and was interred in Bunhill-fields burying-ground. [Smith's Account. Symptoms of Groth and Decay. W.A. C. B and the Inscription on his Tomb in Bunhill Fields; which is worth preserving, and is as follows. FRANCIS SMITH, Late of London, Bookseller, Whose grateful memory may this stone perpetuate, During the reigns of Tyranny and Oppression, In the seventeenth Century, For urging the frequency of Parliament And publishing the sentiments of Freemen, Suffered much By Fines and corporal Punishment. Unremitted severity Necessarily much impaired his constitution, Yet this spot did not receive him, Till Heaven, by the hand of The glorious King William, Had restored to his almost ruined Country, The Rights of Men, of Christians and of Britons. He died, Keeper of the Customs to that great Prince, 22 Dec. 1691. This stone was restored by his descendant, ,Thomas Cox, citizen of London, 1761; who hopes to rest with his family in this place.] Carolus Maria Du Veil, D.D. was another general baptist of considerable eminence. He was born of jewish parents, at Mentz, in Lorrain and educated in that religion; but, by comparing the prophetic parts of the Old Testament with the New, he was convinced that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah; and embraced christianity. At this his father was so incensed, as to attempt to kill him with a drawn sword. He joined the Roman catholics, and obtained high honours and great preferment in the French church. In 1672, he published a Commentary on the gospels of Matthew and Mark, in which he took occasion to defend the tenets of popery. This gained him such reputation as a polemic divine, that he was appointed to write against the Hugonots, or French protestants. In order to confute these schismatics, it was necessary to read their writings. This Dr. Du Veil did: and, finding the truth on the side of those whom he had undertaken to confute, he nobly joined them. He fled from France, to avoid the effects of this conduct, to Holland; and afterwards came to England. In a short time, he obtained the patronage of several bishops and dignitaries of the English church and became tutor and chaplain in a noble family.

In 1679, he published an Explication of Solomon's Song; and, in 1680, an Exposition of the Minor Prophets. These works gained him great reputation; and procured him the friendship of the bishop of London, who gave him free access to his library. Here he met with some of the writings of the English baptists: by a candid perusal of which, he was convinced that their principles were most agreeable to the word of God. A young maid-servant in the bishop's family was a baptist; and much despised, on that account, by her fellow servants. The Doctor, however, formed an acquaintance with her; and she

procured him an interview with Mr. Hanserd Knollys, a worthy particular baptist minister. Mr. Knollys, on conversing with him, perceiving that his doctrinal views agreed more nearly with the general than particular baptists, recommended him to Mr. J. Gosnold. With that good man, Dr. Du Veil formed an intimate acquaintance; was baptized by him, and became a member of the church in Paul's-alley. When this change in his sentiments became known, it lost him all his patrons and employments in the establishment; except Dr. Tillotson, who retained his friendship for him till his death. [There is some obscurity attending the chronology of these facts, though they are well attested both by history and tradition. Mr. Gosnold died previous to the publication of Dr. Du Veil's Exposition of the Minor Prophets, when the author appears to have been in full favour with his episcopalian patrons. Probably the Dr. might have formed an intimacy with Mr. Gosnold, and have leaned to his sentiments, for some time before he openly avowed himself a baptist.] In 1684, Dr. Du Veil published, in Latin, "A Literal Explanation of the Acts of the Apostles;" which, in the following year, was translated into English. In this work, the author vindicated his newly acquired principles: and it procured him a handsome, letter of thanks from the learned and pious French divine, M. Claude.

For some time, Dr. Du veil had the oversight of a small congregation in Gracechurch-street: but his imperfect pronunciation of our language rendered his preaching almost unintelligible to an English audience. He, therefore, practised physic, in the latter part of his life: and the baptists, in consideration of the Sacrifice which he had made to principle, raised him an annuity, which he enjoyed till his death. "He was," says Mr. Crosby, "a grave, judicious divine, a good chronologer, a skilful grammarian; and such a pious good man, as brought honour to any cause in which he was embarked." [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 108--IV. pp. 252-259. Wilson, Vol. I. p. 206, and P.I.]

SECT 5.--Hints respecting the General Baptists in Kent, and the Southern Counties from the Revolution to the close of the seventeenth century.

Through all this period, the general baptist church at Biddenden continued to flourish. In 1691, William Todd and Andrew Robbins were elected elders; and the number of members amounted to one hundred and thirty-three. The inconvenience of the distance of situation was still felt; and it was agreed, for mutual accommodation, to meet at three places: the whole society to assemble at Biddenden every other Lord's day; and, on the intermediate Lord's day, to meet for public worship in two divisions; one at Smarden and the other at Tenterden or Headcorn. The number of members, in 1700, appears to have been one hundred and forty-two. [Biddenden C.B.]

Towards the close of the last period, persecution seems to have driven Mr. S. Taverner to seek shelter in London; where he preached, says Mr. Crosby, "as often and as publicly as the circumstances of the times would permit." No sooner, however, did the storm subside, than he returned to his beloved charge, at Dover: and resumed his labours amongst them. In 1692, he licensed the south end of his dwelling-house for public worship; but it does not appear clearly, whether this was intended as the regular place of meeting for the congregation, or only as a situation for occasional preaching. Mr. Taverner laboured

diligently and acceptably, in the service of his Master, till Aug. 4th. 1696; when he was translated to the church triumphant. In 1692 and 1693, he had attended the general Assembly, as representative of the church at Dover, when Mr. F. Eastwicke accompanied him, as elder of the church at Folkstone and Hythe. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 113. P.I. from original Records and General Association Minutes.]

The members of the general baptist church at Canterbury availed themselves of the quiet and toleration which the Revolution introduced, to renew their covenant with God and with each other, and to revive the vigour of discipline which the recent troubles had caused, in some degree, to relax. In 1698, there were three elders over this congregation; Daniel Saffery, Samuel Ongley, and Searles Jarman; though the time of the ordination of the two last is not preserved. At this time, the church consisted of one hundred and thirty members: who appear to have been zealous for the cause of Christ, and liberal in the support of it. Mr. Ongley, their pastor, at his decease, bequeathed more than three hundred pounds towards the purchase of convenient premises, in order to erect a new place of worship. About the same time, another friend, Mr. Ronden, left one hundred. pounds for the same purpose. These sums were expended in purchasing and fitting up a commodious building for a meeting-house, and a piece of ground for a burying place, in the Black Friars, Canterbury; which were duly secured, in trust, for the use of the general baptist church in that place: and are still in their possession. [Private Information.]

The church at Bessell's Green was at, this time flourishing and harmonious, and maintained a steady regard to discipline. But as only extracts from their records have been preserved, we cannot recover the particulars. In 1692, Joseph Brown attended the General Assembly, as elder of this church. There was, also, a general baptist Church then at Marden, in this county, of which Mr. F. Cornwell was elder; who accompanied Mr. Brown to the assembly. Probably he was the son of Mr. F. Cornwell, already mentioned, as one of the founders of the baptist interest in Kent. At that time Cranbrook was esteemed a branch of the church at Marden.

Mr. Joseph Wright was preserved to preside over the church at Maidstone till after the close of the seventeenth century; but we have no account of the circumstances of the congregation. He was much respected: and, in his old age, probably in good circumstances; as tradition says that he was once mayor of Maidstone. He died in 1703, aged eighty years; and was buried at Tovil, a neighbouring village; where his tomb still remains, with an inscription, in Greek and Latin, which is now nearly effaced. His successor, in the pastoral office, was Mr. David Brown; who, in 1704, took his place at the General Assembly, as elder of this church.

Mr. M. Caffin outlived this century, and died at Horsham 1714, aged eighty-six. In his declining years, he was assisted in the ministry by his son; who succeeded him in the pastoral office, and had for his colleague Mr. Thomas Southon. Under these ministers, the cause appears to have flourished.

At the close of this period, the church at Downton, in Wiltshire, was reduced to thirteen members; but, about that time, Mr. Benjamin Miller took the oversight of it, and laboured

very successfully, in that part of the vineyard, for nearly fifty years. But as this church now forms a part of the New Connection, we shall have another occasion to resume its history.

The general baptists at Portsmouth increased during this period, under the care of Mr. Thomas Bowes, who, towards the close of this century, was advanced to the office of messenger. He contributed not a little to the promoting of a public disputation, which took place, Feb. 22d. 1699. Mr. Chandler, a paedobaptist minister, had established a lecture, once a fortnight, at Portsmouth: the plan of which leading him to discourse on the sacraments, he treated with much severity the principles and practices of the baptists. These lectures were taken down, in short hand, by a gentleman, who, though a baptist, was in the habit of attending them. He shewed them to several of his friends; and, amongst others, to Mr. Thomas Bowes; who, thinking that the cause of truth might suffer, if it passed unnoticed, waited on Mr. Webber, the pastor of the particular baptist congregation at Gosport. That gentleman coinciding in opinion with Mr. Bowes, a party of baptists repaired to Mr. Chandler's meeting-house, while he was employed in answering the objections of the baptists. At the close of the service, Mr. Bowes, standing up, openly charged the lecturer with preaching false doctrines; and desired that he would admit a public dispute on the subject with an ordained minister of the gospel. Mr. Chandler accepted this challenge; provided that his opponent should be a man who understood the laws of disputation. The paedobaptists applied to the magistrates of Portsmouth, to procure them a licence from the king, "publicly to vindicate the common cause of the reformed churches, and settle the wavering in the belief and practice of those truths which tend very much to the advancement of early piety and religion." His majesty complied; and both parties looked out for the ablest champions. The baptists, at first, turned their eyes to Mr. Caffin but he, being suspected of heresy, was passed over; and Dr. W. 354

Russell, pastor of the general baptist church at High Hall, London, was requested to undertake the defence of their cause. Dr. Russell's coadjutors were, Mr. John Williams, of East Knoyle, and Mr. J. Sharpe, of Frome, both particular baptists. They were opposed, on the part of the paedobaptists, by Mr. Chandler, Mr. Leigh, and Mr. Robinson; all eminent presbyterian ministers. The scene of combat was the presbyterian meeting-house at Portsmouth. There, in the presence of the governor, lieutenant-governor, mayor, and magistrates of Portsmouth, and a large and respectable auditory, attended by the civil and military power, to preserve order, the champions entered the lists; and, for upwards of nine hours, amused the spectators with all the manœuvres of polemics: the particulars of which would neither be interesting nor edifying. Both parties, as usual, claimed the victory and a fierce paper was ensued in which many bitter things were said of each other, and much injury done to the cause of true religion.

These public challenges were common among most parties, in the seventeenth century: and many exhibitions, like this which we have just described, took place. The general baptists were, too well persuaded of the goodness of their cause, and too zealous in promoting it, to decline these contests; and were frequently engaged. But the Portsmouth disputation was the last scene of this nature; and the custom expired with the century. A

method of discussing religious tenets has been adopted, more agreeable to their spirit and importance; and less dependent on the ability or ignorance, the confidence or timidity of individuals. [Crosby, Vol. III. pp. 312-353. Mr. Chandler's impartial Account, &C.]

A number of general baptist churches in Somersetshire, and the adjacent counties, had, prior to the Revolution, formed themselves into an association. In 1691, they published their creed, under the title of "A short Confession, or, a brief Narrative of Faith of some baptized congregations in the West, in the county of Somerset, or near adjacent, who stedfastly deny the doctrine of Antinomianism, and personal Reprobation." From the introduction to this paper, it appears, that they were then united in sentiment and affection among themselves; but were so much calumniated and despised by other denominations, that they declined all union with them in religious exercises. In order to remove this odium, and to obtain acceptance with their christian neighbours, they gave this public "account of their faith in the great things of the gospel." How far this publication accomplished their designs, we cannot say: but, in a few years afterwards, they resumed their associations, which had, for some time, been discontinued. The first meeting was held in 1693, at Taunton. These churches assumed the name of the Western Association; and flourished for a long time after the close of the seventeenth century. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 259. Vol. IV. App. No. I. Gen. Assembly's Minutes, 1693, &c.]

"From this imperfect sketch of the history of the English general baptists, during this short period, we are compelled to observe, that the seeds of decay had taken deep root in most of their churches and associations. Disunion among themselves, and a departure from the faith for which, during one hundred years, they had so zealously contended, brand the close of the seventeenth century; and too evidently prove that the glory was then departing from them. We shall therefore pause here, and take a review of the doctrines and practices which distinguished their best days.*

[* Since the last section was sent to the press, we have been favoured with the loan of a copy of the Minutes of the General Assembly from 1689 to 1728. In this valuable manuscript, the names of several churches and ministers are recorded of which we were wholly ignorant. We insert the principal of them in this note, to preserve them from total oblivion and excite further investigation.--They are the church at Dedham, in Essex, under Isaac Ham;--at Tilbury, in the same county, under J. Butcher;--at Burnett, Herts, represented by J. Willis and J. Askew;--at Mobstone, under Mr. J. Paish;--at Ditcheing, under N. Webb;--at Warbledon, under R. Norden;--at Burnham, Bucks, under H. Field;--at Dwissham, Wills, under H. Miller;--at Whitlesea represented by J. Cooper and T. Shearman;--at Turner's Hill, by J. Parry, and various others. In 1692, it was agreed "that brother Reeves, go into Yorkshire, to preach the gospel, plant churches and set those in order that are there:' At the same time, John Cox attended as representative from that county. Some years afterwards Mr. Cox was proposed as a candidate for the work of the ministry in Yorkshire; and, after some hesitation, was approved by the assembly. From these hints, it is evident, that there were general baptist churches in Yorkshire, at the close of the seventeenth century; though, it is to be feared, that all tracts of them are lost. In the minutes of the Lincolnshire Association, there is mention made of a John Cox of York, who, in 1701, maintained several strange notions, and pretended himself to be

specially commissioned to restore the whole law of Moses; against whom that association protested. If this was the person who attended the General Assembly, it is probable, that his extravagancies hastened the decline of the Yorkshire general baptists. Gen. Ass. Minutes 1692, 1693, and 1697'. Linc. Ass. Minutes: 1701, 1702.]

CHAP. IV.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

SECT. 1.--Preliminary Observations--Confessions of Faith, and other documents.

The author thinks proper to premise, that he by no means proposes to stand forth as the advocate of all the parts of doctrines or discipline adopted by the zealous christians of whom he writes. They were men; and, as such, fallible: it would, therefore, be weak to suppose they never erred. Nor shall he undertake, among the various opinions and practices which he may have occasion to record, to distinguish the precious from the vile. Be, certainly, has his own sentiments: and will, of course, approve of those that coincide with his system, and disapprove of those that differ from it. But every reader has also the same right to judge for himself; and will, without the writer's assistance, assign to each tenet its place under truth or error, according as it agrees or disagrees with his own creed. The following sections, therefore, will contain nothing more than an impartial historical account of the doctrines taught, and the discipline maintained, by the general baptists of the seventeenth century; with, occasionally, a statement of the arguments by which they defended them; stated, as far as a due regard to the connection will permit, in their own words.

Nor is it designed to give a system of doctrine and discipline which was universally adopted by the general baptists. No such system existed. Among such a number of professors, each a zealous advocate for the right of private judgment, it would be unreasonable to expect complete uniformity, either in sentiment or practice. Education, connection, personal attachment, and various other circumstances, would lead two equally honest and able minds to draw different conclusions from the same premises. Such was the case with the English general baptists; considerable diversity of views, on many points, existed among them. Yet it is presumed, that it will appear, from an impartial survey, that, in all the leading articles of Christianity, they were, in a very pleasing degree, of one mind. And there was one point in which they all agreed: they all esteemed the holy scripture as the rule of faith and practice; and manifested a sincere desire to bow with implicit submission to what they judged its dictates. Some of their most striking peculiarities may be traced to a laudable anxiety to follow literally the injunctions of the Bible. They had not yet begun to examine the possibility or rationality of the doctrines of revelation, nor, the propriety or justice of its precepts: their highest ambition, in their best days, was, in strict conformity to the letter of scripture, to believe the one and practise the other.

But though they acknowledged no standard of truth except the word of God, yet they found it necessary, in order to remove calumny and vindicated, their own characters, to publish, from time to time, explicit statements of their sentiments and practices, or, as they were usually styled,

"Confessions of Faith;" and, in other modes, to state and defend their principles from the press. From these sources, the materials for this chapter have been drawn: and it may be useful, before we proceed, briefly to recapitulate the principal of these publications.

We have already had occasion. to state at large the sentiments of the venerable John Smyth, the father of the English general baptists. [See Book II. Chap. 1. Sect 2.] Soon after his death, his followers thought it necessary to publish a Confession of faith, which was printed at Amsterdam in 1611. This maintains all the opinions which we have seen avowed by Mr. Smyth, and gives us considerable information on various points on which he had no opportunity of speaking. In 1615, a paper was published, by the same party, under the title of "Persecution for Religion judged and condemned;" in which they take occasion to state their sentiments on many important points of doctrine. As this paper appears to have been sanctioned by the whole body of baptists in England, it may be esteemed a public document. Under the same sanction, was the Supplication to king James I., published in 1620. From this time to the Restoration, we have not met with any document of so Public a nature; but, that they continued to maintain the same great truths, we have abundant evidence--from the transactions of their churches, as preserved in the original records of their societies--from the writings of their most eminent ministers--and from the reports of their adversaries.

Immediately after the Restoration, in March, 1660, the famous Confession of Faith, which was afterwards presented, by Thomas Grantham and Joseph Wright, to king Charles II., was subscribed by certain elders, deacons, and brethren, met at London, from various parts of the kingdom, and approved by upwards of twenty thousand.* This Confession was long esteemed the Creed of the English general baptists. It was reprinted in various forms, under the sanction of several general assemblies and associations, at different periods, till many years after the close of the seventeenth century. It was also "printed on a sheet to be hung up in a frame;" and, in this form, adorned the apartments of many of this denomination. This Confession has been thought by some too concise on certain important articles, and too ambiguous in others. Mr. Crosby supposes that Mr. Grantham himself was not perfectly satisfied with it; and therefore inserted it in his *Christianismus Primitivus*, with the addition of "a few explanatory supplements, and the testimony of many of the ancient writers of christianity." Mr. Grantham, however, assigns another reason for these comments. "They were added," he says, "to shew, that though the composition of these articles be new, yet the doctrine contained therein is truly ancient." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. p. 63.]

In 1678, the general baptists of the counties of Bucks, Hereford, Bedford, and Oxford, published a Confession of Faith, which they called "An Orthodox Creed," signed by fifty-four messengers, elders, and brethren. The evident design of the compilers of these articles appears to have been to approximate as closely to the Calvinistic system as they

could, without giving up their distinguishing tenets: and, in some doctrinal, points, it differs materially from the Confession of 1660. This creed is very metaphysical; and attempts to explain and account for those things which the former only asserts. It is highly probable, that this essay at the explication of inexplicables, introduced or encouraged that spirit of philosophizing on sacred subjects, which, soon after its publication, distracted this denomination. It does not, however, appear, that it was ever generally approved. A contemporary writer, a messenger among the general baptists, thus describes it. "'Tis true, some small exceptions may be made against some few passages in it; but nothing that respects the fundamentals of religion: there's nothing that directly opposeth the word of God. But they were men who composed it; and men may err. They expounded as well as they could, and imposed upon nobody but left others to judge for themselves, and to receive their well-meant interpretations, if they could understand them; if not, to let them alone." [Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, p. 39.] This passage shews us the light in which these christians viewed Confessions of Faith: they esteemed them expositions of their own sentiments, which every one had a right to accept or refuse, as he saw reason.--Thomas Monk, of Buckinghamshire, was considered as the composer of the Orthodox Creed. [Minutes of General Association, 1700.]

In 1691, the general baptists who dwelt in Somersetshire, and the neighbouring counties, published a Confession of Faith, in twenty-seven chapters. This agrees, in all material points, with the Confession of 1660: but it seems not to have been much known in the other parts of the kingdom. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 259. Vol. IV. App. No. 1.]

During the unhappy disputes concerning the Trinity, which distracted the general baptists at the close of the Seventeenth century, many confessions, articles, expedients, &c., were, on various occasions, published by the contending parties. But as none of these were generally received, we refer them to the history of those contentions.

Early in the seventeenth century, the general baptists published a "Description of what God hath predestinated concerning man." We have not been able to obtain a sight of this work: but a refutation of it, by H. Ainsworth, now lies before us. It is entitled, "A seasonable Discourse: or, a Censure upon a Dialogue of the Anabaptists;" and affords considerable information respecting the early opinions of this denomination, being first published in 1623.

In 1678, Mr. Grantham's "Christianismus Primitivus" appeared; which, from the universal approbation it received, may be considered almost as a public document. And, in 1701, Mr. Hooke published, under the sanction of the Lincolnshire Association, "A Necessary Apology for the baptized Believers." These, with Jeffery's "Whole Faith of Man," Stanley's "Christianity Indeed," and various other pieces, as well as the records of particular churches, will throw it great light on the subject of the following sections, which will, it is hoped, preserve us from wandering far from the path of truth.

As the general baptists professed to build all their religion on their religion on the Bible, it may be proper to close this Section with a few extracts, expressive of their sentiments touching the holy scriptures.

"The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are written for our instruction; and we ought to search them, for they testify of Christ. They are, therefore, to be used with all reverence, as containing the holy word of God, which only is our direction in all things whatsoever." [Confession of 1611, Art. 23.]

"The holy scripture is the rule whereby saints, both in matters of faith and conversation, are to be regulated; they being able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus: profitable for doctrine, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works." [Confession, 1660 Art. 23.]

"The authority of the holy scripture depends not upon the authority of any man, but only upon the authority of God; who hath delivered and revealed his mind therein to us; and contains all things necessary for salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any that it should be believed as an article of the christian faith, or be thought requisite to salvation." [Orthodox Creed, Art. 27.]

These Confessors then proceed to assert the superiority of the scriptures to all pretended inspirations, impulses, and dreams; to the light of nature, and the opinions of popes, councils, or fathers; and to urge the duty and advantage of every person's reading and obeying them: concluding with a catalogue of the books of the Old and New Testaments; "all which," they say, "are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and practice."

The language of the Somershire Confession is perfectly consistent with the above articles and the writings of the general baptists abound in similar sentiments. One of the propositions they advanced, in their petition to king, James I. in 1620, was, that "the only rule of faith is the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, contained in the sacred scriptures; and not any church, council, prince or potentate, nor any mortal man whatsoever." [Crosby, Vol. II. App. No. 11.] Thomas Grantham not only asserts "the truth and divine authority of the scriptures as the undoubted oracles of God," but devotes a laboured dissertation to the proving of this proposition that "the only infallible and authoritative judge of controversies about religion is the Lord himself, as he speaketh by his Spirit in the scriptures." [*Christ. Prim.* Book I.]

And, omitting all the rest, we shall close this article with a passage from Joseph Hooke's *Apology*. "The holy Bible," he says, "is our Canon: it is the rule of our whole religion: hence we learn all things. By this, we confute heretics, and prove every article of our faith. According to this, we live; and on this, we ground our hope. And whatsoever is not in this, we reject from our canon. We have no rubrics, nor common prayer-books, nor directory, nor liturgy, nor form of public worship: the Bible is to us instead of all." [Page 34.]

SECT. 2.--The opinions of the English General Baptists respecting the Deity.

On this sublime subject, and others connected with it, two parties may be discerned among the English general baptists. The one, sensible of the grandeur and incomprehensibility of the Deity, and of the weak and limited powers of the human mind, spoke with great caution in their explications of the essence and attributes of the infinite Being: generally using scripture terms, and never attempting to explain and define what they reverently deemed, in their own expressive phrase, "unwordable." The other, more confident, ventured to attempt a description of the mature and properties of God; and, in this attempt, introduced, without scruple, terms invented by the schools, though unsanctioned by the inspired penmen. The former were much more respectable, both for numbers and character: the later were the subscribers of the Orthodox Creed; will chiefly confined to the counties of Bucks, Herts, and the vicinity. But these two parties differed more in appearance than in reality: both entertained similar ideas, on these important subjects; though the one dared not to use the language of the other. This, we presume, will appear from the following quotations. "There are Three which bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these Three are One God, in all equality: by whom all things are created and preserved, in heaven and in earth." [Confession of 161, Art. 1.]

"There is but one God the Father; of whom, are all things, from everlasting to everlasting, glorious and unwordable in all his attributes."--There are Three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these Three are one." [Confes. 1660, Art. 1 and 7.]

"There is but one only living and true God whose subsistence is In himself; whose essence cannot be comprehended to any but himself: a most pure, spiritual, or invisible substance; who hath an absolute, independent, unchangeable, and infinite being; without matter, or form, body, parts, or passions." "In this divine and infinite Being or unity of the Godhead, there are Three Persons or Subsistencies, the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit; of one substance, power, eternity, and will each having the whole divine essence, and yet the essence undivided." [Orthodox Creed, Art, 1 and 3.] The article then goes on to explain the mystery of the divinity in the terms of the Athanasian creed; which is adopted in a subsequent part of this Confession, because it "may be proved by most undoubted authority of holy scripture, and is necessary to be understood of all christians." [Ibid, Art. 28.]

The concise and general manner in which the Confession of 1660 speaks on this abstruse subject, has given some late writers occasion to surmise, that the compilers did not believe the doctrine of the Trinity; but a few short extracts from the works of some of those who subscribed it, will, it is presumed, remove this suspicion.

Thomas Grantham, who is supposed to have drawn up this Confession, and must have known what was intended to be expressed, in his "Testimony of Antiquity" to the seventh article, quotes this passage from Augustin: "The Spirit, being the Father's and the Son's, is properly in scripture called the Holy Spirit. It is neither Father nor Son; but personally distinct from both." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. Chap, 5.] In his *Christianisimus Primitivus* he has a section to prove "the unity of the Godhead from the Unity of the nature and essence

of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;" in which Mr. Grantham observes, "As christian doctrine knows but only one true God, so it recommends us, for the most ample discovery attainable in this world, of this one and eternal Godhead, to the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; which some call the Trinity: a phrase no way offensive to Christianity. Yet, as some of the ancients well observe, it is not necessary to impose words on any man which God himself has not used. Yet truly this term, the Trinity, hath very near affinity with the language of the Holy Ghost, 1 John 5:7." Having treated at large on the essence of these Three, he concludes thus: "Now whether these Three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thus one God, as hath been shewn, may fitly be called three Persons, I shall not determine: only this I say, that I see no inconvenience that can attend it. For, since the Father is openly called a person, Heb. 1:3, and the Son the express character of his Person or substance; it may seem no way inconvenient to allow the same to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part 1. pp. 40, 43.]

Mr. Thomas Monk, another of the subscribers of the Confession of 1660, was a zealous Trinitarian, as clearly appears from the "Orthodox Creed," of which he was the reputed author, and from a laboured treatise in defence of that doctrine, which he published in 1673, under the title of "A Cure for the cankering error of the New Eutychians."

But, omitting, at present, any further quotations respecting the Trinity in general, we shall proceed to examine their sentiments concerning the Son and the Holy Ghost. Of the Lord Jesus Christ they speak in this decisive manner.

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person or subsistence in the Trinity, in the fulness of time was manifested in the flesh, being the seed of David, and of the Israelites, according to the flesh, the son of Mary the Virgin, made of her substance, by the power of the Holy Ghost overshadowing her; and being thus true man, was like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, being one person in two distinct natures, True God, and True Man." [Confession of 1611, Art. 8.]

"There is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, who is the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; yet as truly David's Lord, and David's Root, as David's Son, and David's Offspring." [Conf. 1660, Art. 3. 1.]

"We confess and believe, that the Son of God, or the eternal Word, is very and true God, having his personal subsistence of the Father alone, and yet for ever of himself as God; and of the Father as the Son, the eternal Son of an eternal Father; not later in beginning:-- Not a God by office, but a God by nature, coequal, coessential, and coeternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost."--"We believe that the only begotten Son of God, the second person in the sacred Trinity, took to himself a true, real, and fleshly body, and reasonable soul, being conceived in the fulness of time, by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, became very and true man, like unto us in all things, even in our infirmities, sin only excepted, as appeareth by his conception, birth, life, and death." [Orthodox Creed, Art. 4 and 5.]

"Concerning God the Son, our Lord Jesus, Christ; we believe him to be the Son of God, and the son of man, truly God, and truly man, the Messiah promised; that as to his divine nature, it was and is of an eternal existence, of and with the Father, and so truly God; and this Godhead veiled itself in a human body, and took upon him the nature and substance of man, on all its parts and infirmities, sin only excepted." [Somersetshire Conf. Chap. 1.]

The testimony of antiquity added, by Mr. Grantham, to the third article of the Confession of 1660, is from Augustine, in these words: "The world being all at peace, Christ, according to the precedent prophecies, was born in Bethlehem-Judah, being openly man of the Virgin his mother, and secretly God of God his Father--Christ Jesus, the substance of Israel, and the Son of David, God's Son, God taking on our man without wasting Godhead, ordered Faith to be a pass for man to God, by his mean that was both God and man." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. Chap. 5.] This comment was considered as so expressive of the sense of the article, that it was ordered, by the general Assembly, in 1691, to be printed with it. [Gen. Assem. Min. 1691.]

The divinity of Christ is, indeed, a favourite theme with Mr. Grantham; and numberless passages might be transcribed, from most of his works, in confirmation of this assertion; but the following extract from his "Sigh for Peace," published in 1671, will serve instead of many. Speaking of some notions respecting the person of Christ, which were propagated at that time, he says: And as I have shewed my dislike to these conceits, (to say no more at present) so I hold it requisite to protest my faith in this case, as I have been taught, and as I have believed, and as I trust I shall hold fast unto the end: That Faith which I have learned, and which is the faith of our churches generally, is this:

"1. That the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is God by nature, and therefore of one substance with the Father, as touching the Godhead. He is called the only begotten of the Father--the express image of his Father's person--the true God, and eternal life--the Lord Almighty. It is he by whom the worlds were made, and without him nothing was made which was made. He is that very Lord, who in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. He is said to be before all things, and by him all things consist. He is the I AM, who, being, in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He is God overall, blessed for ever. Amen. I conclude, then, that he of whom these things are spoken, is doubtless God by nature.

"2. This Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is man by nature. He was made lower than the angels: He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He is of one substance with his church, touching his manhood and for that cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. As they are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same. He was made of a woman, raised up of the fruit of David's loins, according to the flesh. He is David's Son: called frequently a man, and the Son of man. He had the properties, and infirmities of man, in all things, sin excepted. This his birth, growth, manner of life and death do declare. I conclude, then, that he of whom these things may be said, is man by nature. The short is this:--Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was before all things, and he that made all things: therefore, he is God by nature. Jesus,

the Saviour of the world, was born in time, and suffered or was slain: therefore, he is a man by nature. Or, yet more shortly: This Jesus is Immanuel, or God-Man in one Person." [Grantham's *Sigh for Peace*, pp. 104, 105.]

Joseph Hooke, the countryman and disciple of Thomas Grantham, was a strenuous assertor of the same truths. A clergyman having objected against the baptists, that some of them held that "Christ is not the true God;" J. Hooke replied, "Whosoever did or do hold it, I believe it is a pernicious doctrine, contrary to God's word, and destructive to the christian faith." And, after reciting the passages of scripture which, in his opinion, proved the contrary, he concludes, "Now all that has been said, with much more of the like nature that might be said, of Christ, according to the scriptures, must needs be true; but cannot agree to him as man, or a God by deputation, or a made God. This, therefore, I conceive must be so spoken, because he is God by nature, coessential, and co-eternal with the Father. For, most certainly, he that made all things visible and invisible was not himself made: and, as he is man, he did not create all things. And yet that he is man, is as true as that he is God. He is David's Son: David's Root and David's Offspring: Immanuel, God with us: God veiled in the flesh."-- "That Christ is a person having in him the nature of God, and the nature of man, is clearly revealed but how these two natures are joined in personal union, remains a mystery." [Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, pp. 4450.]

This is sufficient, with respect to Mr. Grantham and his friends: we shalt only subjoin a few extracts, to the same purpose, from eminent general baptists, in other parts of the kingdom, who subscribed the Confession of 1660.

Francis Stanley, an highly esteemed messenger of the baptized churches in Northamptonshire, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus exclaims;

"I have not words to express his royal majesty, and to set forth his excellent glory. He is exalted far above all principalities, and far surpasseth all names and dignities: for the Godhead dwells in him bodily; and he is more than worthy of all duty and glory. His love is unparalleled; his wisdom, matchless; his power, boundless; his justice, unquestionable; his innocency, admirable; his treasures, inestimable: Immanuel, God with us; who is exalted above, and triumphs over all his enemies." [Stanley's *Christianity Indeed*, p. 4.]

The chief design of Thomas Monk's "Cure for the cankering Error of the New Eutychians," was to defend the doctrines of the proper divinity and humanity of Christ, against some who had begun to propagate contrary notions. "The chief things we are to consider," he says, "in the person of Christ, are, that Christ is God--that Christ is man--and that he is God and man in one person." [*Cure for Cankering Error*, p. 74, &c.] He undertakes to prove that Christ is God,--"by apparent and manifest sentences of scripture, wherein the divinity of Christ is averred--by his works, which were altogether divine--and by the worship and honour which was yielded unto Christ, both of the saints that believed, and of the angels." But it would be tedious to quote all the passages relating to this doctrine, from a work wholly on the subject.

George Hamilton, the zealous pastor of the general baptist church at Biddenden, in Kent, when speaking of the second coming of Christ to reign on the earth, expresses himself thus: "From hence you may see, if you will peruse the scriptures, that the Lord Jesus our King, as he was a man, and is, so he shall reign as a man; although the man of men as we may say, being the firstborn from the dead. For consider him as God, he cannot be sent, nor appointed by any, neither is in subjection to any; but being a man in whom the Godhead is completed, he is in a capacity to be sent by the supreme and almighty Father." [Hammon's *Sion's Redemption discovered*, p. 118.]

Samuel Loveday, the founder of the church now assembling in Church-lane, Whitechapel, London, in commenting on Rom. 9:5, observes, "In this eulogium of Jesus Christ, we have two circumstances considerable, 1. A description of Jesus Christ, as to his deity and dignity in himself: 2. An acknowledgement of the glory due to him from us."-- "That Jesus Christ is God over all things and persons in heaven and earth, the scriptures are plain: and also that the title of God is appropriated to Jesus Christ, is plain. Acts 20:28. 1 Tim. 3:16. God manifested in the flesh. Titus 2:13. He is, therefore, the great God, eternal, and everlasting." [Loveday's *Personal Reprobation reprobated*, p. 33.]

John Griffith, the venerable elder of Dunning's-alley church, London, when treating of the principle of "Faith towards God," Heb. 11:1, says, "It is so called, because it is placed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God and man: and hence the apostle tells us, he 'testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.' The blessed Jesus is proposed as the great object of gospel faith: and, since the gospel declares this Jesus to be God, that is, of the same essence with his Father, that faith which is fixed on him may truly be called faith towards God. The holy apostle, John, assures us, that this is the commandment of God the Father, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ: and then he informs us, that this Jesus is the true God, and eternal life. As such, the true believer receives Christ, and depends on him for life and salvation: and, therefore, holy Thomas acknowledges him as his Lord and his God." [Griffith's *God's Oracle, and Christ's Doctrine*, p. 20.]

It would be easy to multiply quotations of the same import; but we forbear. Sufficient has already been produced, to prove that the English general baptists, as a body, during the seventeenth century, maintained the proper divinity and humanity of the adorable Saviour. There appears, indeed, to have been a few individuals, among the churches in Kent and Sussex, who early began to puzzle themselves with attempting to explain the mysteries of the incarnation; and, by this vain attempt, were led from the simplicity of the faith. But this deviation was confined to a few speculative persons, and was unknown or disregarded by the general body. Mr. Grantham affirms, that, in 1671, many of their congregations had never heard of these speculations; and that there was not one church in England, that countenanced them. [Grantham's *Sigh for Peace*, p. 104. And, in 1701, Mr. Hooke represents the, whole denomination as agreeing with the church of England in the doctrine of the Trinity. [Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, p. 44.] We have seen one church formed on contrary principles in Kent, in 1677, and we shall have occasion to record some disputes on this subject, which, towards the close of the century, distracted this denomination: but it will appear, it is presumed, upon an impartial examination, that both

parties professed to maintain the doctrines avowed in this section; and that Mr. Caffin himself did not dare openly to oppose them. In short, the general baptists, as a body, were united in these views; and the deviations from them, previous to A.D. 1700, were very inconsiderable.

To complete the subject of this section, we shall close with a few extracts respecting the Holy Spirit.

In the Creed of 1611, there is no express article respecting the Holy Spirit; but he is mentioned in the first article, as one of the Three, which are one God.

The Confession of 1660 speaks more plainly and asserts, "That there is one holy Spirit, the precious gift of God, freely given to such as obey him: that thereby they may be thoroughly sanctified, and made able, without which they are altogether unable to abide stedfast in the faith, and to honour the Father, and his Son Christ, the author and finisher of their faith. There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. [Conf. 1660, Art. 7.]

"We believe that there is one holy Spirit, the third person subsisting in the sacred Trinity, one with the Father and Son, coequal, coeternal and coessential with the Father and Son; to whom, with the Father and Son, three persons, and but one eternal and almighty God, be, by all the hosts of saints and angels, ascribed eternal glory, and Hallelujahs. Amen." [Orthodox Creed, Art. 8.]

"Concerning the Holy Spirit, we believe, suitable to the scriptures that speak thereof, that, the Holy Spirit is of God, and is God, of the divine essence, coeternal with the Father and Son, and proceeding from both, God of the same nature, the enlightener, convincer, converter, sanctifier, strengthener, and comforter of his people, in and by the means appointed for that end, namely, the word of truth, and doctrine of the gospel.." [Somersetshire Creed, Chap. I. Art.] Mr. Grantham explains more fully the idea which he and his friends had on this sublime subject, in his *Sight for Peace*.

"By the Holy Ghost," he says, "we do not mean the spirit of man in the most reformed and elevated state imaginable; neither any created spirit whatsoever. But by the Holy Ghost, we mean that Spirit, by whose operation the creation of the world was brought forth and formed, who knoweth all things, even the deep things of God, and who is present every where: which Spirit we therefore believe to be one with the Father, in nature and essence, and therefore rightly said to be God." [Grantham's *Sight for Peace*, p. 4.]

SECT. 3.--Of the Creation, the Fall of Man, and Original Sin.

"God, in the beginning, created all things of nothing; and made man of the dust of the earth, in his own image, in righteousness, and true holiness: yet, being tempted, he fell through disobedience. Through whose disobedience all men sinned: his sin being imputed unto all; and so death went over all." [Conf. 1611. Art. 2.]

"God, in the beginning, made man upright, and put him into a state and condition of glory, without the least mixture of misery: from which he, by transgression, fell; and so came into a miserable and mortal state, subject unto the first death." [Conf. 1660, Art. 2.]

"The Orthodox Creed, after describing at length the creation, the nature of man, as composed of body and soul, the terms of the first covenant, made with Adam in his innocency, and his fall, proceeds thus: "Original sin is the fault and corruption of every man that naturally descendeth from Adam: by means of which man has not only lost that original righteousness that God created him in, but is naturally inclined to all manner of evil, being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity: and, as St. Paul says, the flesh lusteth against the spirit. And, therefore, man justly deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this concupiscence, or indwelling lust, remaineth even in the regenerate, that they cannot obey God perfectly in this life, according to the tenor of the first covenant." [Orthodox Creed, Art. 11, 13, 14, 15.]

The Somersetshire general baptists, after stating their belief in the creation, the original innocency and felicity of man, "in which he might have continued, any decree of God in any wise notwithstanding"--his voluntary fall--and the just sentence of his Creator against him, proceed: "As this transgression did not only reach the case of our first parents, but also of their posterity, being in them: so, likewise, did the sentence that the Lord passed upon them concern not only the persons of our first parents, but, in them, all those generations of men that were to descend from them. 'Judgment came upon all men,' &c. The same penalties that were inflicted upon our first parents for that sin, which penalties are death and those temporal miseries that came upon them as the effect of that sin, do certainly come upon their posterity. They are brought into a mortal dying state, liable to all the miseries of this life; and, in fine, to death itself.' 'Death passed upon all men for that all have sinned:' mortal man could not procreate an immortal seed:--he begat a son in his own likeness." "But that this transgression did procure, in itself, the second death, in the lake of fire, or hell torments, either to Adam himself, or any of his posterity, as is by some not only imagined but affirmed; as it is a doctrine that is altogether scriptureless and so false, so it is altogether irrational: from whence it has no room in our faith." [Somersetshire Confer. Ch. 3, 4.]

We have transcribed the last passage at length, as it exhibits a fair view of the general opinion of these professors on the subject of original sin: the denial of which was constantly urged against them by their enemies. The charge was, in part correct. They did, as a body, the authors of the Orthodox Creed excepted, deny that any person was subjected to eternal punishment on account of the sin of their first parents [see the Confession of 1660, Art. 10.--Ainsworth's *Censure*, pp. 30-37. Hooke's *Apology*, p. 51. Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp 12-17. Hammon's *Discovery of the Loss of the earthly Paradise*, passim. Loveday's *Personal Reprobation reproved*, p. 97. Grantham's *Christ. Prim*, ubi infra.]; because God has expressly declared against the imputation of the father's sins to the children. Ezek. 18:1. &c. They seem uniformly to have arrived at this conclusion, though from various premises. Some allowed, that a certain degree of guilt did attach to all men on account of the sin of Adam; but this they supposed was all

removed by the death of Christ. This was that sin of the world which the Lamb of God took away, John 1:29. [Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, p. 51.] Others insisted that the penalty of Adam's disobedience was temporal, not eternal death;--because, temporal death only was mentioned in the threatening that preceded his fall, and in the sentence that followed it. Gen. 1:17, and 3:17-19;--because Paul says, Rom. 5:12 that the death which came by Adam passed on all men; which cannot be said of spiritual death; but is literally true, when understood of temporal death;--and because Christ will raise all men the death caused by Adam's sin, 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; which, as all men will not be delivered from spiritual death, must signify the resurrection of all men from temporal death. [Grantham's *Christ. Prim*, Book II. Part I. p. 77 & Part II.] Others refined on these arguments; and, assuming Eccl. 12:7, & Zech. 12:1, as their authorities, concluded, that only the mortal part of man is derived from his parents; but that the spirit comes immediately from God; and therefore could not be defiled, by the sin of the first man, because it had then no existence. [Hammon's *Discovery*, pp. 14, 15.]

But, though the general baptists strenuously denied that the guilt of Adam's sin was imputed to any of his posterity, yet they stedfastly maintained that the moral stain and pollution contracted by their first parents was entailed on his descendants. Ainsworth assures us, that the Anabaptists against whom he wrote, who, if he does not, slander them, "held that original sin is an idle term, and that there is no such thing," asserted that all men have weak natures, and cannot obey and live, but sin and die." [*Censure on the Anabaptists*, pp. 29 and 37.] And the authors of the Confession of 1611, the same persons whom Ainsworth censures, explain themselves more explicitly. "Men are by nature," they say, "children of wrath; born in iniquity, and in sin conceived: wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God and, therefore, man is not restored to his former estate. But as man, in his estate of innocency, having in himself all disposition unto good, and no disposition to evil, yet being tempted might yield or might resist; even so now, being fallen, and having all disposition unto evil, and no disposition unto any good; yet God giving grace, man may receive or may reject grace." [Conf. of 1611, Art. 4.] These good men saw and lamented the proneness of the natures, even of their children, to sin; and acknowledged that "the first thing they did, as soon as were capable of a law, and temptation approached, was to break the law of God, as their first father did." [Hammon's *Discovery*, p. 11.]

"Original sin," says Mr. Grantham, "is come upon all; even the very infant state of mankind lie under it: of whom that saying is true, Rom. 5: "They have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Yet death reigning over them proves the transgression of Adam to be upon them. Nor is it convenient to extenuate or lessen this sin, either in its nature or the punishment it brings with it: mankind being corrupt even from their origin, and wholly deprived of the glory of God, without the intervening mercy of a Saviour.--It has been to Adam's posterity like the sin of traitors, which bringeth with it corruption of blood to their offspring; for which they must bear the shame of such transgressions. [*Christ. Prim*. Book II. Part I. pp. 77, 78.]

Perhaps we may concisely explain the ideas of these christians on this subject, in the words of Dr. Jeremiah Taylor, which are quoted in the Somersetshire Confession, and

referred to by Mr. Hooke, as expressing their sentiments. "Original sin," says the Doctor, "is not an inherent evil; not a sin properly but figuratively: that is, it is the effect of one sin, and the cause of many; a stain, but no crime. It does not destroy our liberty which we had naturally. It does not introduce a natural necessity of sinning. It does not damn any infant to the eternal pain of hell." [Somersetshire Conf. Chap. 4. Hooke's *Apology*, p. 51.]

With these sentiments respecting original sin, these good men found no difficulty in admitting the salvation of all that died in infancy. This cheering truth, indeed, forms a prominent article in three of their Confessions, and is assumed in the fourth. The Confession of 1660 states it thus:

"All children dying in their infancy, having not actually transgressed against the law of God in their own persons, are only subject to the first death, which comes upon them for the sin of Adam, whence they shall be raised by the second Adam: and none of them shall suffer eternal death for Adam's sin; for to such belongs the kingdom of God." They were so explicit in stating their belief on this point, says Mr. Grantham, "that they might remove, if possible, all prejudice out of the minds of men touching their non-admission of infants to the participation of gospel ordinances, in the visible church." [Conf. 1660, chap. 10. See also the Orthodox Creed, Art. 47. Somersetshire Creed, Chap. 4. Ainsworth's *Censure*, Hooke's *Apology*, &c. Especially Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part II. pp. 4, 5, 6; and his *Truth and Peace*, pp. 32, 33, 34.]

SECT. 4.--Election and Reprobation--the Extent of the Redemption purchased by the death of Christ, and the manner in which it is enjoyed--Free Will--Agency of the Spirit.

The whole race of man being thus reduced, by the fall of their first parent, to a state of sin and helplessness, and exposed to everlasting destruction on account of actual transgressions, let us inquire what these professors believed as to the designs of an offended God towards his fallen creatures.

"God, before the foundation of the world, hath predestinated, that all that believe on him shall be saved and that all that believe not shall be damned: all which he knew before. And this is the election and reprobation spoken of in the scriptures: not that God hath predestinated men to be wicked, and so to be damned; but that men, being wicked, shall be damned. For God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; and would have no man to perish." [Conf. of 1611, Art. 5.]

"God hath, even before the foundation of the world, chosen, or elected, to eternal life, such as believe, and so are in Christ:--his decree of mercy reacheth only to godly men; whom, saith David, God has set apart for himself--Men, not considered simply as men, but ungodly men, were of old ordained to condemnation.--There is no respect of persons with God." [Conf. of 1660, Arts, 8, 9.]

The authors of the Orthodox Creed, in their usual manner, took great pains to explain foreknowledge, election, reprobation, &c.; and were in some danger of darkening counsel by words; yet they seem to sum up their meaning thus: God foresaw Adam's fall, but did

not decree it. Yet, foreseeing it in his eternal counsel and wisdom, did elect and chuse Jesus Christ, and all that do or shall believe in him, out of that fallen lump of mankind. And hath manifested his love and grace by Jesus Christ, his elect or beloved son, through the gospel means, to all : and hath given us his word and oath to assure us that he desires not the death of the wicked, but rather that they repent, or turn to him, and live. And if any do perish, their destruction is of themselves." "God hath decreed to punish all those wicked or ungodly, disobedient and unbelieving or impenitent sinners, that have or shall despise his grace, love, and wooings or strivings of the holy Ghost, or by a total and continued rejection of grace, or by a universal and final apostacy." [Orthodox Creed. Art. 10--It is not surprising that modern authors should mistake the doctrine of this Creed for Calvinism as, more than a century ago, the same mistake took place.--In 1700, a minister of the name of Boyer, at Wimeswold, Leicestershire, preached the doctrines of high Calvinism, asserting that he "drew them from the writings of Thomas Monk, and about fifty brethren besides, of the general faith, all stars of the first magnitude;" avowedly referring to the subscribers of this Creed. The matter was brought before the General Association at London; and it was determined, that, "It was utterly false; there being no such thing in their articles." To convince the friends at Wimeswold of the truth of this assertion, the Association sent them the Orthodox Creed, with a few comments, that they might examine it for themselves. They, at the same time, advised, that this minister should be dealt with, "not only as one who preached false doctrine; but also as one who had preached untruths concerning his brethren."--While the anecdote shews that there is some obscurity in this Confession; it proves, that the authors were general baptists, and acknowledged as such by this Association; at which, it is highly probable, that several of the subscribers of the Orthodox Creed were present. Minutes of General Association, 1700.]

"Thee word of God Is his decreed will; and there is no secret will or decree of God contrary to his revealed word and will: and his decree is, that whosoever believeth and obeyeth him, persevering therein to the end, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." "Whatsoever God hath absolutely decreed, shall certainly come to pass--but many things that come to pass are not decreed by God." "The infinitely wise and holy God, suitable to his name and nature, did elect or chuse unto himself from all eternity, and merely of his own good pleasure, out of the whole body and bulk of mankind, an entire species or sort of men, namely those that in time do believe and sincerely obey him, patiently continuing in the way of well-doing unto the end." "Whensoever God doth reject or reprobate any person of mankind, it is for their willful and actual transgressions, as the just deserving cause thereof; and not for his own will any other-wise considered." "The primary or antecedent intent of God, in his decree of reprobation, is the salvation, and not the damnation of men. The Lord declares, that he had rejected or reprobated them; yet exhorts them to duty, with promises on their performance: and if ever the Lord does finally reprobate any person or persons, it is for their final rejecting of him, in his many calls and gracious invitations. From whence we may conclude, that those that own personal election and reprobation, before time, so as to deny the love of God to the world, do not own the faith of the gospel." [Somersetshire Conf. Arts. 18, 20, 21.]

In perfect conformity with this view of the divine purposes towards fallen man, the general baptists speak of the provision made for his salvation.

"The Lord Jesus Christ, whom God freely sent into the world, as freely gave himself a ransom for all; tasting death for every man: a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and to the knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved. For which end, Christ hath commanded that the gospel 386

should be preached to every creature. So that none shall eternally suffer in hell, for want of a Christ that died for them; but for denying the Lord that bought them, or because they believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God." [Conf. 1660, Art. 3.]

"Christ died for all men; and there is a sufficiency in his death and merits for the sins of the whole world. He hath appointed the gospel to be preached unto all; and hath sent forth his Spirit to accompany the word, in order to beget repentance and faith: so that if any do perish, it is not for want of the means of grace manifested by Christ unto them; but for the non-improvement of the grace of God, freely offered to them through Christ, in the gospel." [Orthodox Creed, Art. 18.]

"God, by Jesus Christ, designed not the recovery of a few only, as some imagine, but of all mankind." "Concerning the extent of the death of our dear Redeemer, we believe, that, suitably to the great end of God the father in sending him into the world, he gave himself a ransom for all mankind;--for the world, for the whole world: and that thereby the world hath its present being: and that thereby there is a way of reconciliation, acceptance, and salvation, opened for all men, From whence we conclude, that if any man come short of obtaining reconciliation, acceptance and salvation, it is not for want of grace in the Father, nor a sacrifice in the Son." [Somersetshire Conf. Arts. 5, 6.]

The great truth, that Christ died for all mankind, or, as it was sometimes expressed, "the doctrine of the universal love of God in Christ to all mankind," was the distinguishing tenet from which the general baptists took their name; and for which they contended with the greatest ardour. It was prefixed to their church-covenants, inscribed in the title of their creeds, inserted in their trust-deeds, and considered as the glory of the denomination. A vigilant jealousy was constantly exercised, to preserve their churches sound in this article of their faith; and frequent opportunities were found, to state and defend it, both from the pulpit and the press. To attempt to transcribe quotations on a subject occurring so frequently would be very tedious: we shall, therefore, only refer to a few of the leading authors." [Ainsworth's *Censure*, pp. 12, 13, &c. Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book. II. Part I. chap. 5 and 6. Loveday's *Personal Reprobation Reprobated*, Passim. Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 1-35. H. Denne's *Drag Net of the Kingdom of Heaven, or Antichrist Unmasked*, p. 85. J. Denne's *Glad Tidings of Peace*, p. 23, &c. &c.--So important did the general baptists, at their first rise, consider this doctrine, that when they received any into their fellowship who had been baptized in the belief that Christ died only for a part of mankind, they baptized them afresh: esteeming their former baptism a nullity, because they had been baptized into a wrong faith. And there is good evidence that the particular

baptists returned the compliment, when they received any from the generals. This was frequently practised, during the civil wars, in Kent and its vicinity; but appears to have been soon laid aside by both parties.--A transaction that occurred in Fenstanton church, in 1653, will illustrate the importance which these general baptists attached to this principle. A certain widow, who had been baptized by R. Denne, being understood to have erroneous sentiments on this point; J. Denne and another brother were sent to admonish her. J. D. began the conversation by lamenting her departure from the faith; and she replied, that, "if by the faith they meant the doctrine of Christ's dying for all, she never had believed it." At this, J. D. expressed his surprise; and observed, that, he was confident, his father would not have baptized her, unless he had understood, that she had believed this truth. The matter was brought before the congregation; and H. Denne attended to explain his conduct. He stated, that he had been led to suppose, that she believed that Christ died for all, from the manner in which she applied, 1 Tim. 1:15: and that he was rather induced to think so, "because it was generally believed, by all the members of the church till the coming of Timothy Trovis from London; who, he was confident, did more harm, than Hymeneus and Alexander mentioned in scripture." The widow, however, still persisting to assert, that she did not believe it at the time of her baptism, though she was now better satisfied, the question was put to the congregation, "whether the baptism was true, seeing she had no true faith?" and It was answered, that, "It was true in the intention of the baptizer; but not true in the intention of the baptized: and therefore, seeing that it is not the intention of the baptizer but of the baptized that makes baptism to be true, it was no true baptism." The woman, refusing to acquiesce in this decision, was excluded. Howard's Looking Glass for the Baptists, pp. 2, 3, and F. S. R. 1653.]

It ought to be added, that these christians agreed in considering the death of Christ as a proper sacrifice for sin; and in asserting that the Lord Jesus suffered in the stead of sinners. "God freely sent Jesus Christ into the world, because of his great love to the world, who as freely gave himself a ransom for all, tasting death for every man, a propitiation for our sins." [Conf. 1660, Art. 3.] "Christ, being made under the law, did perfectly fulfil and keep it; and underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have suffered; our sin, and the punishment of it, being reckoned or imputed to him, he, being made a curse for us, underwent and trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath for us:." "The same Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience to the whole law, and sacrifice of himself, which, through the eternal spirit, he offered up unto God the Father, hath fully satisfied the justice of God, and reconciled him to us." [Orthodox Creed Art. 17.]

To the same purpose, Mr. Grantham employs an entire section, in shewing that, "According to the will of God, and his eternal wisdom, Christ did, in the place and stead of man, fulfil that law by which the whole world stood guilty before God:" and another, in proving that "Christ did really, and not phantastically, suffer death in his own body for the sins of the world." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. part 1. Chap. 3. Sect. 5, and 6.] "Christ Jesus," says H. Denne, "was an offering unto God: but what was the effect of this offering? Even to make an atonement, to make peace, to redeem us from the curse of the law, from the, tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, which the law had threatened, and must of necessity have fallen on us, had not he been made a curse for us.

But in him the Father hath declared himself well pleased," [*Man of Sin discovered*, p. 26] His son, John Denne, maintains the same tenets. "Christ, by the sacrifice of himself, paid the price of our redemption, discharged the debt due from us, and satisfied the justice of the Father for our sins: and, therefore, it is written 'Ye are bought with a price.' 'He gave himself a ransom for us.' What is a ransom, but a price paid for the redemption of captives? This Christ did for us: whereby we are discharged, and our sins taken away. He is a propitiation for our sins. What is a propitiation, but a sacrifice of expiation, whereby we are healed, and our debt freely, discharged?" [*Glad Tidings of Peace*, pp. 20, 21.]

It would be easy to multiply quotations; but we prefer a few extracts, to shew the way in which, as these general baptists believed, a sinner becomes a partaker of the blessings purchased by the death of Christ.

"Man is justified only by the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith: yet faith without works is dead." [Conf. 1611. Art. 6.]

"The way set forth by God for men to be justified in, is by faith in Christ. Rom. 5:1. That is to say, when men shall assent to the truth of the gospel, believing, with all their hearts, that there is remission of sins, and eternal life to be had in Christ: and that Christ, therefore, is most worthy their constant affections and subjection to all his commands: and, therefore, resolve with purpose of heart, so to be subject to him in all things, and no longer unto themselves: and so shall, with all godly sorrow for the sins past, commit themselves to his grace, confidently depending on him for that which they believe is to be had in him. Such so believing, are justified from all their sins; their faith shall be accounted unto them for righteousness." [Conf. 1660, Art. 6.]

"Faith is an act of the understanding; giving a firm assent to the things contained in the holy scriptures. But justifying faith is a grace or habit, wrought in the soul, by the holy Spirit, through preaching the word of God, whereby we are enabled to believe, not only that the Messiah is offered to us, but also to take and receive him as a Lord and Saviour, and wholly and only to rest upon Christ for grace and eternal salvation." "Hereby we have deliverance from the guilt and punishment of all our sins, and are accounted righteous before God, at the throne of grace, by the alone righteousness of Christ the mediator, imputed or reckoned to us through faith." [Orthodox Creed, art. 23 and 24.]

"In short, we understand that men are justified,--1. By the grace of God, as the primary efficient cause.-2. By the death of Christ, as the meritorious and deserving cause.-3. By the word of the Lord, with its ministry as the instrumental cause to beget faith and obedience.-4. By faith and obedience as the conditional cause, or the holy terms on which they are justified." [Somersetshire Conf. Art. 15.]

"That the righteousness of Christ is imputed to men, and made theirs, through faith which worketh by love: and this faith is accounted unto men for righteousness," is a doctrine that runs through every part of Mr. Grantham's account of the "ancient christian religion:" and is stated, defended, and illustrated, in an entire section. "The whole world," he says, "on being found guilty before God, could not, by any righteousness which they had done,

lift themselves out of that state of sin and misery: wherefore God, in the greatness of love to mankind, hath laid help upon One that is mighty to save; who brings near his righteousness to those that were far from righteousness, through faith." [Christ. Prim. Book II. Part I. Chap. 3. Sect 1. See also on this subject, Griffith's *God's Oracle*, pp. 18-42. H. Denne's *Grace Mercy and Peace*, pp. 85, 86, &c. Hooke's *Apology*, p. 51. Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, p. 52, &c. &c.]

Man now being fallen and having all disposition unto evil, and no disposition or will unto good, yet God giving grace, man may receive grace, or may reject grace: according to that saying, 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live.' Deut. 30:19." [Conf. 1611: Art. 4.]

Unbelief being the cause why the just and righteous God will condemn the children of men; it follows against all contradiction, that all men, at one time or other, are put into such a capacity, as that, through the grace of God, they may be eternally saved." [Conf. 1660, Art. 4.]

"Man hath neither power nor will, nor a matter what to will for his own good, nor how, nor when in respect of a seasonable time, but what he hath from God: for all power belongeth to God. Yet we believe, that man ought to employ his will, yea, all the powers of his soul, in and about spiritual things: which, if men were faithful in, God would have the glory, and they the advantage." [Somerset. Conf. Art. 8]

"Man, falling from his state of innocency, wholly lost all ability or liberty of will to any spiritual good for his eternal salvation: his will now is in bondage under sin and Satan; and, therefore, not able of his own strength to convert himself, nor prepare himself thereunto; unless God's grace takes away the enmity out of his will, and by his special grace frees him from his natural bondage under sin, enabling him to will freely and sincerely that which is spiritually good." [Orthodox Creed, Art. 20.]

We add a short extract or two to shew what part of the great work of conversion these good men ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit.

"The Holy Spirit, the precious gift of God, is freely given to such as obey him, that thereby they may be thoroughly sanctified, and made able, without which they are altogether unable, to abide stedfast in the faith, and to honour the Father, and his son Christ." [Conf. 1660, Art. 4.]

"Vocation, or calling, general or common, is when God, by means of his word and Spirit, freely of his own grace and goodness, doth ministerially acquaint mankind with his gracious good purpose of salvation by Jesus Christ, inviting and wooing them to come to him, and to accept of Christ, revealing to them the gospel covenant: and in those that with cordial hearts do improve this common grace, he in time worketh unfeigned faith, and sincere repentance: and by his grace they come to accept of Christ as their only Lord and Saviour, with their whole hearts." [Orthodox Creed, Art. 21.]

"God gives the blessing of his Spirit in and with his word: the word being the Spirit's ministration: so that where the word is in truth, light, and power preached, there it is attended with the Spirit.--There is an absolute necessity for the workings of the Spirit, both in bringing and keeping souls to the Lord. Yet the Holy Spirit is not so given but that it may be resisted, and hath been, to men's destruction." [Somersetshire Conf. Art. 14.]

"No man can make this profession of Christ sincerely, heartily, and to his comfort here and hereafter, as God hath ordained, but by the Spirit of God; for unless a man herein be led by the Spirit of God, he is no child of God." "By its operation we taste the heavenly gifts whilst in this world, and are fitted for an inseparable union with Christ to eternity." "Without the influence of God's Spirit, illuminating our judgments, and heightening our affections, and so evidencing with our spirits that we are the children of God, we may talk of much, but we truly inherit very little of those virtues of which we talk." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part I. Chap. 6. Sect. 3.]

"The Spirit of God is the principal agent by which faith is wrought in us: and, therefore, faith is reckoned amongst the gifts of the Spirit. Now the Spirit works in us, not only by its own operations, but also, in an especial manner, by the preaching of the word." [Griffith's *God's Oracle, and Christ's Doctrine*, p. 30.]

Though the general baptists boldly asserted, that justification was by faith alone, yet they strenuously insisted on holiness of life, as the necessary and certain effect of saving faith. Man, they say, "is justified by faith alone; yet faith without works is dead." [Conf. 1611. Art. 6.] "We verily believe that unless men, professing and practising the primitive form and order of Christ's doctrine, shall also beautify the same by a holy and wise conversation, the profession of the visible form will be rendered to them of none effect; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. [Conf. 1660. Art. 14. See also Orthodox Creed, Art. 26. Somerset Conf. Art. 16, &c.]

Amongst other motives which they urged, to engage professors to a holy circumspection of conduct, a powerful one was, the fear of final apostasy. For we have not found any of this denomination, except the authors of the Orthodox Creed [Art. 36], who maintained the doctrine of the impossibility of true believers falling from grace. "Men may fall away from the grace of God, and from the truth which they have received and acknowledged, after they have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come; and after they have escaped from the filthiness of the world, they may be entangled therein again, and overcome. A righteous man may forsake his righteousness, and perish. Therefore, let no man presume to think, that because he hath, or once had, grace, he therefore shall always have grace. But let all men have assurance, that if they continue unto the end, they shall be saved. Let no man, then, presume; but let all work out their salvation with fear and trembling." [Conf. 1611. Art. 7. See also Conf. 1660. Art. 18. Somersetshire Conf. Art. 17. Ainsworth's *Censure*, pp. 19-29. Griffith's *Treatise on Falling from Grace*, passim. Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 113-120, &c.]

These christians looked forward with confident expectation to a resurrection of the just and unjust, all eternal judgment, and a future state of endless bliss or misery. "There shall be, thro' Christ, who was dead, and is alive again from the dead, a resurrection of all men from the graves of the earth; both the just and the unjust: that is, the fleshly bodies of men, sown into the graves of the earth, corruptible, dishonourable, weak, and natural, which, so considered, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, shall be raised again, incorruptible, in glory, in power, and spiritual. Thus considered, the bodies of the saints, which here suffer for Christ, shall, when united to their spirits, inherit the kingdom, and reign together with Christ."--"There shall be, after the resurrection from the graves of the earth, an eternal judgment, at the appearing of Christ and his kingdom: at which time of judgment, which is unalterable and irrevocable, every man shall receive, according to the things done in the body." [Confession of 1660, Arts. 20, 21. See also Conf. 1611, Arts 26, 27. Orthodox Creed, Art. 50. Somersetshire Conf. Arts. 24, 25. Griffith's *Lively Oracles*, p. 205. Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book. II. Part I. Chap. 3. Sect. 10.] Indeed all their Creeds unite in representing the states of mankind as irrevocably determined at the awful day of judgment; and that the misery of the wicked will be of equal duration with the felicity of the righteous: or, as Mr. Grantham expresses it, "the parties respectively concerned in the eternal judgment will be in an equal state with respect to duration, though their portions will differ exceedingly; even as much as light and darkness differ." How important the aspiration with which that good man concludes this solemn subject: "O that, therefore, men were wise, that it may be well with them to eternity!" [Ubi supra.]

SECT. 5.--The principles of the English Baptists misrepresented even by respectable authors.--Soul Sleepers.--Millennium.--Obedience to Magistracy.

Such were the principal sentiments of these general baptists, as they appear in their own writings. They certainly differ much from the tenets ascribed to them by their enemies: but it would be equally tedious and useless to perpetuate the calumnies of ignorance or malice, by attempting to refute them. It may, however, be proper to notice one or two instances in which their doctrines have been strangely misrepresented by authors of a more respectable character.

[* Though we may permit the reproaches of the angry disputants of the day to sleep in undisturbed obscurity; yet the works of Dr. Wall, Mr. Whiston, and Dr. Mosheim will be read in future ages, and distant lands: and therefore deserve attention.

MR. WALL was vicar of Shorcham, in Kent, in the beginning of the last century: a part of the kingdom in which the general baptists were numerous and zealous. This called his attention to the subject of infant baptism: and he took immense pains to collect all the information respecting the mode and subject of baptism that could be found in the first five centuries of christianity. These researches he published, in 1705, in two vols. 8vo. under the title of "An History of Infant Baptism." It is a valuable work--a monument of the industry and candour of the author. His own party were so well pleased with it, that he received the thanks of the Convocation, and a Doctor's Diploma and the baptists have no reason to complain; as it has been the instrument of confirming many in their attachment to believers' baptism by immersion. In this work, the author gives an elaborate

account or the character and tenets of the general baptists among whom he lived; which, when we consider that it was written by a clergyman, does honour to both parties. "They are," he says, "as commendable as any other sort of professors, for a sober and grave, quiet and peaceable way of living." "They are generally commended for maintaining their poor liberally: and for passing censure on such of their congregations as live disorderly." - "In some counties of England, they are the most numerous of any sort of men that do separate from the church. This is chiefly the case in Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surry, &c. there being very few, in those parts, that make any separation from the church, but they." "Socinians they have some, that creep in among them: but I have not heard of one church or congregation of them that makes profession of that doctrine: but, on the contrary, that they who profess it openly are rejected from their communion." At last, after intreating them to unite with the church, even if they retain their distinguishing opinions, and endeavouring to prove that it was their duty to comply with his request, he adds, "One thing I am persuaded of concerning the antipaedobaptists: and that is, that, if they were convinced that this joining in the public service of the church were lawful and practicable for them, they would join at another rate than some shifting people do now-a-days. I take them, generally, to be cordial, open, and frank expressers of their sentiment. If they thought, that St. Paul's command of receiving one another did reach the case, they would not interpret it trickishly. They would conclude, that what God commands us to do, he means we should do cordially, sincerely, and bona fide: and, therefore, that if his word do bid us receive one another, he means we should do it intirely." -- Such was Dr. Wall's opinion of these christians: and he had every opportunity of knowing their character. See *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part II. pp. 216, 217, 223, 266, 275, 416.

In 1717, the learned and laborious, though eccentric MR. WHISTON, joined the general baptists at Lyndon: and soon after published "A friendly Address to the Baptists;" in which he very frankly enumerates what appears to him their excellencies and their defects; and gives his reasons for joining them. He afterwards inserted this Address in the "Memoirs of his Life and Writings:" and thus secured it from oblivion, and gave it publicity. This piece, though well meant, has done considerable injury to the character of the general baptists. Mr. W. described them as he found them, in 1747, when their tenets and discipline had undergone a considerable change: and, being an Arian himself, he would naturally represent them as much as possible of the same sentiments. *Memoirs*, Vol. II. pp. 455-491. Mr. Whiston being famous among both mathematicians and divines, his *Memoirs* were read at home and abroad. They fell into the hands of DR. MOSHEIM, when he was composing his celebrated "Ecclesiastical History;" and, with Dr. Wall's History, appear to have been his principal guide, in drawing up the account of the English general baptists. We shall notice a few mistakes into which this respectable writer has been led; partly by too implicit a reliance on his authorities, and partly by a false hypothesis respecting the origin of the professors of whom he wrote: and, in doing this, we shall sufficiently correct the statement of Dr. Wall and Mr. Whiston. Dr Mosheim sets out with asserting the probability, that the English baptists "derive their origin from the German and Dutch Mennonites; and that, in former times, they adopted their doctrine in all its points." But we have already seen, in the early part of this History, that both these suppositions are groundless. The first English baptists, after the Restoration, though they dwelt in Holland, had no connection with the Mennonites; and disapproved of their

doctrine so much, that they would not even receive baptism from them, (Supra, p. 70.)--He next complains of the latitude of the religious sentiments held by the English general baptists; and says, "They receive among them persons of every sect, even Socinians and Arians." This might be the case when Mr. Whiston joined them, whom he mentions as an instance: but, during the seventeenth century, they maintained a strict jealousy over the tenets of those in communion with them; and obeyed the scripture injunction of rejecting heretics, with rigour. And Dr. Wall assures us, that, in his time, those that openly professed Socinianism were rejected from the communion of all their churches. But Dr. M. supports his charge, by referring to the Confession of 1660: which, he says, is "drawn up with so much latitude, that, with the removal or alteration of a few points, it may be adopted by christians of all denominations."--This is, certainly, an effectual mode of producing uniformity, and we dare promise the learned author, that it will always succeed. In any creed, "remove, or alter" the points in which it differs from others, and it will, doubtless, suit anyone. Dr. M. then states, in eight particulars, "the sentiments, rites, and tenets, peculiar to the English general baptists." The first is, that "they look upon their sect as the only true christian church: and shun, with the most scrupulous caution, the communion of all other religious societies."

How this statement is consistent with the latitude of sentiment, which rendered their communion accessible to all kinds of christians, we pretend not to say. But allowing this charge to be just, as indeed truth requires us to do; yet surely this opinion and conduct was not "peculiar" to them. Other denominations were ready enough, in those disputing times, to think themselves the only Christians and to stand at a distance from others.--Dr. M. further states, that many of the English general baptists embraced the particular opinion of Menno, that the body of Jesus was not derived from the substance of the blessed virgin.--But we have seen this doctrine protested against by them, as a body, in all their public documents, from the time of their first founder, John Smyth, to the conclusion of the 17th Century. And some years after that period, Dr. Wall declares his belief, that there were but few of them in England that held it. The fact appears to be, that then and for a long time afterwards, this tenet was proscribed by all the General Baptist churches; and that the very few individuals who favoured it were obliged to disguise it or explain it away, in order to preserve fellowship with them.--In the same indiscriminate manner, this historian charges them with holding the doctrine of the Millennium and the sleep of the soul. On these heads we shall only add to what is said above in the text, that, as both these doctrines were held by many besides general baptists, it is hardly fair to reckon them among the tenets "peculiar" to the latter. We refer our remarks on this author's account of the administration of baptism and extreme unction, as he is pleased to style it, to the next sections. In the mean time, we are sorry, that the picture of the English general baptists which is likely to continue the longest, and be exhibited the most extensively, should be so carelessly drawn: and present such an imperfect likeness of the original.

We observe, also, with some surprise, that this celebrated author asserts, that, if the common accounts maybe believed, the English particular baptists do not "repeat the administration of baptism to those who had received it, either in a state of infancy, or by

aspersion instead of dipping,"--But we recollect the caution of the wise man, Prov. 26:17--and forbear. Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.* Vol. IV. pp. 478-481.]

In all ages of the church, when men have been permitted to study the scriptures for themselves, various opinions have been adopted on religious subjects, even by pious and learned christians. Popery and prelacy, assisted by the civil magistrate, laboured strenuously and perseveringly to produce uniformity; but to no effect: whenever the mind was released from its shackles, it still formed its own system. The confusion in political affairs, and the civil wars in the close of the reign of Charles I., relaxed, and, in the event, abolished, for a time, the authority of the church of England, and checked the usurpation of the presbytery, which pressed forwards, to seize the throne from which prelacy had been hurled. Britons were thus restored, during the interregnum, to the liberty of discussing religious subjects, and of professing their own sentiments: and the usual effects were produced. Old systems of theology were revived; foreign doctrines imported and adopted; and various opinions, apparently new, were promulgated. Some of these doctrines, being of a more important and practical nature, gave rise to different sects: others, more general and speculative, were not confined to any party, but were frequently maintained and opposed by different persons of the same community. Now it is certainly unjust to charge any party, as a body, with sentiments, which many among them opposed; and which were maintained by numbers of other denominations. Yet the general baptists have, from age to age, been branded with holding tenets which, as a body, they never espoused; and against which, in many instances, they have, in the most public manner, protested.

The state of separate spirits, from the period of death to the resurrection, was then a subject of much discussion. Three systems were adopted, each of which had been patronized by eminent men in former ages of the church. Some thought that the departed soul immediately passed into its final state: others, that it continued, while separate from the body, in an intermediate state of happiness or misery, which they distinguished by the term Hades, or the invisible state: while others believed that the souls both of good and bad men remained in a state of insensibility, till the day of judgment; when, on the resurrection of their bodies, they would be reunited to them, and fixed in a state of everlasting felicity or anguish. This last opinion has been ascribed to the general baptists, by almost all who have mentioned them: and hence they were stigmatized with the nickname of Soul-sleepers. But this doctrine was never avowed in any of the public documents of this party: and was thus expressly condemned in the Orthodox Creed [Art. 49]. "The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls or spirits, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into paradise, where they are with Christ, and beholding the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies: and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. And besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the holy scripture mentions none." Nor, indeed, have we found one general baptist author, in the seventeenth century, who favoured the opinion of the sleep of the soul, in a separate state, except George Hammon, of Biddenden: he certainly openly

avowed and defended it. [*Disc. of the Lat. of the Loss of Paradise. passim.*] All their other writers, that have fallen under our notice, never allude to the doctrine at ail: but treat the subject of the resurrection as pertaining only to the body. [Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 64-70.--Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part I. Chap. 6. Sect. 6.--Griffith's *Lively Oracles*, pp. 169-494.]

These professors have frequently been represented as unfriendly to magistracy, especially to monarchy; and this has usually been ascribed to the opinions which they entertained respecting the Millennium. It cannot be disputed, that many of them, in common with a numerous body of christians of almost every other name, confidently believed, that the Messiah would reign again in person: and, having subdued the nations of the world to his sway, and extirpated the wicked, reign on earth for a thousand years, before the last day of general judgment: and that, at the commencement of that blissful monarchy, the departed saints would be raised from the dead, and those who were then living be changed, and all reign with their King through the whole of that period: at the close of which, the wicked would be raised, and the final decision made. And it is equally plain, that some of them conjectured that the revolutions in political affairs, which then distracted Britain, were intended to introduce this glorious kingdom. But, it does not appear, that they carried either their speculations or their hopes, on this subject, to the extravagant lengths to which many of their contemporaries pushed theirs.

In the Confession of 1611, the personal reign of Christ is not noticed: and, in that of 1660, it is expressed nearly in scripture terms. The Somersetshire general baptists, and, if we may judge from the order in which they have placed the articles, the Confessors of 1660, thought that the promised reign of Christ and his saints would succeed the general resurrection and the final judgment, and last through all eternity. They supposed that this earth would then be restored to more than paradisiacal splendor and beauty--that the New Jerusalem would descend in great state from heaven to earth, in such a manner as that the royal palace of the Messiah would settle exactly on Mount Zion--that in this glorious city, as the metropolis, Christ and his saints would maintain a prosperous, peaceable, and eternal kingdom, over the whole earth. This was the magnificent scene to which many of them looked: and they had numerous scriptures, ready to justify, as they thought, their high expectations.

But, whatever views these christians had as to the time and circumstances of this future kingdom of the saints, they appear to have been unanimously of opinion that it was unlawful to endeavour to hasten its advent, by any attempts to disturb the government under which they lived. They knew that God could, when he pleased, establish it: and they left it to him to accomplish his own promises. "We believe," said they, "that this kingdom ought not to be set up with the material sword: that being contrary to the very nature of Christianity."--"It will be the day of the Lord's vengeance; and it belongs to Him to execute it, and not to us." [Somersetshire Conf. chap. 27.] And Mr. Grantham seems to speak the general sense of his associates, when, alluding to this subject, he says, "If any man be impatient of Christ's coming, and would be doing any thing to the disturbance of the civil peace of nations, as if he would usher the Lord Christ into his seat of judgment; we look upon such men to be more busy than wise: and do exhort them to

study to be quiet, and to do their own business; and to let God Almighty and his holy Child Jesus alone to the accomplishment of what he hath promised in this behalf. Let it suffice us to do what we are allowed in this case: and that is, daily to pray, 'Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.'" [Christ. Prim. Book III. Ch. I. Sect. 3.--See also Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 161 176.--Hammon's *Sion's Redemption discovered*, passim.]

Whatever the reader may think of the soundness of these speculations, yet it is evident that they had no tendency to make those who held them bad subjects. Indeed the uniform conduct of the general baptists evinced the sincerity of their frequent testimonies in favour of the divine appointment of magistracy. We have never, in our review of their history, found them among the men given to change: nor have we met with a single instance in which any one of them has been accused, as a disturber of the peace of society; except the much injured John James. They seem to have paid conscientious obedience, in civil concerns, to the existing authorities, without enquiring by what right, they were exercised. And though they nobly declared, that, in the affair of religion, they were subject to God alone, and boldly and uniformly refused to comply with any human imposition; yet they passively submitted to the penalties which the laws of their country inflicted, however unjustly, on their non-compliance. This conduct was in perfect consistency with their avowed principles, which they, took every opportunity of laying before their fellow subjects: and which are concisely but clearly stated in a "Testimony," published by their messengers and elders, a few years before the Restoration: of which Mr. Grantham has thus preserved the substance.

"1. That It is not impossible, but some persons may be found, under the same form of profession with the present baptized churches, as well as in the churches planted by the apostles themselves; and that even, while they were living, who are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."

"2. If there be any such, they are protested against, as persons unworthy of the holy profession of christianity: and humble request is made, that men's particular disorders of that kind may not be imputed to the whole party, engaged in the same form of religion with them."

"3. We declare that magistracy is God's ordinance in all nations: and that it concerns no christian, as such, to inquire after the dueness or undueness of the call of the civil magistrates to that high place of trust: but that it becomes them always to submit themselves to the powers that be; as being of God, who putteth down one, and setteth up another, as it pleaseth him."

"4. That we judge ourselves obliged, by gospel rules, not only to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; but also to pray for all that are in authority, that we, under them, may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."

"5. That if it shall happen, at any time, that the magistrate shall command things, in matters of religion, which we, through conscience to God cannot actually obey; that then

we know no rule we have to resist the power which God hath ordained; but, in all cases, patiently to suffer, or humbly to intreat favour." [*Christ. Prim.* Book III. Ch. I. Sect. 1.]

If, after perusing this solemn testimony, any reader should require still further evidence that the general baptists were good subjects, we refer him to the various petitions, addresses, and remonstrances mentioned in the course of this history [Supra, pp. 89, 92, 186, 189, 192, 193, 194, &c.], and to the, authorities quoted in the margin. [Conf. of 1611, Art. 24.--of 1660, Art. 25. Orthodox Creed, Art. 45.--Somersetshire Conf. Chap. 22.--Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* III. Chap. I.]

SECT. 6.--The Discipline of the English General Baptists--their Ideas of a Church--its Members--Baptism--Imposition of Hands--Church Officers--Messengers--the Election, Ordination and Maintenance of Officers.

Having thus glanced over the doctrinal tenets of these general baptists, we shall take a concise view of the Discipline of their churches.

By "a church of Christ," they meant "a company of faithful people, separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God; being knit unto the Lord, and to one another by baptism, upon their own Confession of faith and sins." [Conf. 1611, Art. 10.] "A particular assembly of people, gathered out of the world by the ministry of the gospel to the visible profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to his will in all his holy institutions. Such a people, so gathered into a particular congregation, continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, they understood to be a gospel church." [Somerset. Conf. Ch. 23.]

"The right and only way of gathering churches," in the opinion of these professors, "is, according to Christ's appointment, Matt. 28:19, 20, first to teach or preach the gospel to the sons and daughters of men; and then to baptize, (i.e. in English to dip) in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,* such only of them as profess repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." [Conf. of 1660. Art. 11.] Persons of this character and such only, they esteemed proper subjects for church fellowship; and therefore at once excluded all infants who were naturally incapable of these qualifications, and all who claimed communion with the church in consequence of being members of a civil society.

[* This expression has given an advantage to the enemies of the General Baptists, which has not been neglected.--Dr. Wall says, "One sort of them do count it indifferent whether they baptize with these words, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;' or with these, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus:' and do, in their public Confession, allow either of these forms. And I have heard, that some of them do affectedly choose the latter. I doubt this is practised by those of them whose chief leaders and directors are underhand Socinians: for they have many such among them. And it is not for the use of those that have a mind to obliterate the belief of the Trinity to baptize their proselytes into the faith and name of it." *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part II. p. 222. But this is directly contrary to his own assertions, when he represents the Socinians as a few that crept in amongst the

baptists in disguise; who, as soon as they discovered their real character, were expelled from all their church. And it is obviously a calumny, as the framers of this Confession were avowedly Trinitarians. This tenet appears to have originated in too liberal an interpretation of Acts 2:38, and 8:16, which are affixed to it in their Confession. Mr. Grantham totally overlooks it in his "Testimony of Antiquity" to this Article: and brings a quotation from Justin Martyr expressly in favour of the usual form. Indeed it does not appear that these professors frequently, if at all, administered the ordinance in the name of Christ alone. We have not met with any allusion to such a circumstance in their records: and the expressions of Dr. W. prove, that, if it was at all practised, the instances were very rare; or the Doctor, living where he did, would have had no occasion to use such guarded terms. Yet, on his authority, Dr. Mosheim says, "They (the English General Baptists) consider it as a matter of indifference whether the sacrament be administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or in that of Christ alone:" *Eccl. Hist.* IV, p 480: thus transferring the tenet, from a few of "one sort" to the whole body. Though it is certain, that the compilers of the Orthodox Creed, in the counties of Bucks, Oxford, Herts, and Cambridge, and the general baptists in Somersetshire and the western counties, expressly direct the administration of baptism to be performed in the name of the sacred Three. Orthodox Creed, Art. 28.--Somer. Conf. Ch. 12.]

Besides these qualifications, they thought it essential to true church fellowship, that the entering into it should be the voluntary act of each individual for himself. "In the primitive constitution of Christ's church," says Joseph Hooke, "the members held a free fellowship: there was no worldly force used in begetting members or holding them together in church fellowship; but their fellowship was from their own free choice, and by mutual consent. And in this we succeed the first churches: for we have no penal laws to force people to our communion, nor ever desire to have; but desire a free and unconstrained consent in all that join themselves to our fellowship. We are for no constraint but the power of God's word and Spirit, to persuade poor sinners to embrace Christ, and eternal life by him, in a sure way of his own prescribing." [Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, p. 76.] By thus making the joining in church-fellowship the voluntary act of the individual, infants were again excluded, and the very root of persecution cut up: for every one had a right to join what denomination he pleased; and, when he saw occasion, to withdraw himself from it.

When persons had given satisfactory evidence of their repentance and faith; and had, at their own request, been solemnly baptized, they were, for some time, considered as proper subjects for church-membership. The pastor, in the name, and by the authority of the church, gave them the right hand of fellowship; by which they were admitted to full communion, and had a right to all the privileges of brethren.

But, towards the commencement of the civil wars, some of these good men, observing that, in various instances which are recorded in the New Testament, the apostles laid hands on those whom they had newly baptized [Acts 8:12, 19.--19:6, 7]; and especially finding that laying on of hands followed baptism in their favourite enumeration of the principles of the doctrine of Christ [Heb. 6:1, 2], concluded that, "as God hath promised to give his holy Spirit to all that are called of the Lord, so he hath appointed a solemn

way wherein his servants and handmaids are to wait upon him for the reception thereof; which way is, the prayers of his church, performed by her ministers or pastors, with the laying on of hands: and this as a principle of Christ's doctrine belonging to them in the minority of their christian state." [Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part II. Chap. III. p. 31.--Sigh for peace, p. 3.]

This doctrine spread rapidly, and very extensively; but never appears to have been adopted by all the general baptists. There were always many respectable churches which opposed the practice; and bore a practical testimony against the imposition of it. Many angry disputes, and much disgraceful altercation originated in this unhappy difference. The advocates for the practice, esteeming it a "foundation principle," and as necessary a prerequisite to communion as baptism, could not unite, at the Lord's table, with those who neglected it. And, though they did not absolutely deny their opponents to be true churches of Christ; yet they thought them entitled to the name, only in the qualified sense in which a person who has lost a limb may be called a man; or a building a house, though it wants an important part of the foundation. It is painful to hear some of the most pious and useful general baptists of the seventeenth century, such as W. Jeffery, T. Grantham, and J. Griffiths, plead for the necessity of this barrier between brethren. [Orthodox Creed, Art. 32.--Conf. 1660, Art. 12.--*Christ. Prim.* ubi supra.--*Sigh for Peace*, passim.--Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 60-64.--Griffith's *Lively Oracles*, pp. 99-156. Imposition of hands on baptized believers, as such, appears to have been unknown to the confessors of 1611. If we credit D'Anvers, it was first introduced, in 1645, by Francis Cornwell, to the church in Bishopsgate-street, which afterwards removed to White's-alley. During the Protectorate, it spread rapidly, in various parts of the kingdom. In 1659, it was defended, by W. Jeffery, in Kent: and, in 1660, inserted in the famous Confession presented to the king. In 1672, the churches in Bucks and the neighbouring counties introduced it into their creed; and it was held by most of the Lincolnshire general baptists. In Loudon, it formed a principal bond of union among the Five Churches: though there were several flourishing societies which opposed the practice. Mr. Griffiths, indeed, quotes the "pious Gosnold" as an advocate for this practice: but it was not adopted by the church in Paul's-alley. The general baptists in the west of England, it is probable, did not approve of it: and there were many churches in Lincolnshire, who bore a decided testimony against making it essential for communion. W.C.B. A.C.B., &c.]

When a number of persons, thus qualified, had agreed to unite and maintain the interest of their Saviour, they set apart a day for fasting and prayer; when, after solemnly devoting themselves to the service of God, they gave to each other the right hand of fellowship; and generally subscribed their names to a mutual covenant, containing a few rules by which they proposed to conduct themselves as members of the same society. On these occasions, they usually procured the presence of a messenger or elder from a sister Church; who, commonly, administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper to the newly-formed church. They were now, however few their number, and destitute of officers, esteemed a "whole church," competent to manage their own concerns, independent of any earthly controul, and responsible for their conduct only to the great Head of the church. Indeed, at their first rise, the general baptists did not affect large societies; but thought that the purposes of their union might be better answered in smaller congregations. They

judged, "that the members of every church ought to know one another, that so they may perform all the duties of love towards one another, both to soul and body. And especially, that the elders ought to know the whole flock, whereof the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. And therefore a church ought not to consist of such a multitude as cannot have particular knowledge one of another." [Conf. 1611, Art. 16.] They believed, "that every congregation, though they be but two or three, have Christ given them with all the means of their salvation; are the body of Christ, and a whole church: and, therefore, may and ought, when they come together, to pray, prophesy, break bread, and administer in all the holy ordinances, although as yet they have no officers:" and, "that as one congregation hath Christ, so have all: and, therefore, no church ought to challenge any prerogative or right over any other." [Ibid. Arts. 11 and 12.] "To each particular congregation the Lord hath given all that power and authority which is in any ways necessary for carrying on of that order in worship or discipline which he has instituted for them to observe." [Somer. Conf. Ch. xxiii. p. 4]

But a church was not esteemed completely organized without its proper officers; and, therefore, they were anxious to procure them as speedily as circumstances would permit. For some time, they had only two orders of officers, Elders and Deacons; in which latter office they employed females as Deaconesses. The officers of every church, they say, "are either Elders, who by their office do especially feed the flock concerning their souls; or Deacons, men and women, who by their office relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren, concerning their bodies." [Conf. 1611, Art. 20.]

Ever attentive, however, to the precedent of scripture, it was not long before they supposed, that they discovered, in the primitive churches- an officer superior to all elder. They remarked, that Barnabas, Luke, Timothy, Titus, and several others were fellow labourers with the Apostles in the preaching of the gospel, and the planting and regulating of churches; and that, in various passages, they are called apostles, or in English, messengers of the churches. They thought it probable, that the angels or messengers, of the seven churches in Asia, to whom the author of the Revelations addressed his epistles were also of the same order. They, therefore, introduced an officer into their system whom they styled a Messenger. He was generally chosen by an association of the representatives of the churches in a certain district: and ordained by those of his own order with great solemnity: the various churches keeping seasons of prayer and fasting. Sometimes a particular church chose a messenger, but, in that case, his business appears to have been confined to preaching the gospel where it was not known, and regulating such churches as he might be made instrumental in planting. It is indeed probable, that, at the first, this was the chief object of their appointment; an object which demanded peculiar attention when the nation was just emerging from the darkness of popery and prelacy, and the rays of divine truth had hardly pierced the gloom. Fixed pastors could not conveniently itinerate to distant parts; and it would have been thought irregular for unauthorized persons to have undertaken it; but the messengers stood ready for this necessary work, and their very office called them to it. "They were appointed," says Mr. Jeffery, "for the gathering of churches and the establishing of them."

But when churches increased, and errors and irregularities sprung up among the young converts and inexperienced ministers, it was judged expedient to extend the messenger's work, by assigning to him the superintendence, and, in a sense, the government of those churches which united in calling him to the office. Thus the Orthodox Creed, in 1678, says, "The bishops," as it styles the messengers, "have the government of those churches that had suffrage in their election, and no other, ordinarily: as also to preach the word to the world." In the same year, Mr. Grantham extends their ministry to three objects: 1. To plant churches where there are none. 2. To set in order such churches as want officers to order their affairs: and 3. To assist faithful pastors or churches, against usurpers, and those that trouble the peace of particular churches, by false doctrines." This last article appears the most objectionable part of the office; and might be employed so as to destroy the independency of churches.--At the close of the period of which we are speaking, Mr. Hooke describes the work of the Messenger as being--to plant churches--to ordain officers--set in order things that were wanting, in all the churches--to defend the gospel against gainsayers--and to travel up and down the world to perform this work. *

[* Orthodox Creed. Art. 31.--Grantham's *Christ. Prim. Book. II. Part II. Chap. 9. Sect. 3*, and Book IV. Treatise 5, pp. 152-170. Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, pp. 78-83.--Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 95-98, &c.--The power of this office seems to have increased as the general baptist cause declined. At the Lincolnshire association, held at Coningsby, May 30, 1775, it is thus defined.--"The messenger who is chosen by the unanimous consent and approbation of the churches, which stand in a close connection together, hath full liberty and authority, according to the gospel, to freely inquire into the state of the churches respecting both the pastor and people, to see that the pastors do their duty in their places, and the people theirs. He is to exhort, admonish, and reprove both the one and the other, as occasion calls for. In virtue of his office, he is to watch over the several flocks committed to his care and charge. To see that good order and government be carefully and constantly kept up and maintained in the churches he is called and appointed to look after and to watch over; to labour to keep out innovations in doctrine, worship and discipline, and to stand up in defence of the gospel." Such an Inquisitor-general is totally incompatible with the independency of the churches, professed by these christians.]

The messengers were chosen, as already hinted, by the joint suffrages of all the churches in a district; but the Elders and Deacons, whose office was confined to one society, were chosen by the free votes of the members of that society. "These officers are to be chosen, when there are persons qualified, according to the rules of Christ's Testament, by the election of the church or congregation whereof they are members." [Conf. of 1611. Art. 21.] None are ordained amongst us," says J. Hooke, "before they be chosen by the free consent of the whole church, or at least of the major part. And good cause it is, where all are equally concerned, that they should be equally satisfied In the choice of such to whom they commit their souls."--In some cases, where the members were few, or the choice doubtful, they referred the decision to the Lord, and cast lots." [In 1658, the church at Fenstanton appointed a day of fasting and prayer for the election of a deacon; when very few of the members attended. Those that were present were much discouraged; but, after solemn prayer, they recollected the Saviour's promise, Matt. 18:20. and determined to

proceed. Four candidates were nominated; and it was resolved to cast lots, to know which of them was chosen by the Lord." Five lots were prepared; one for each candidate and one blank that, if it should please the Lord that none should be chosen, at that time, the blank might be drawn. This being done solemn prayer was again made to the Lord to order and dispose of them according to his will: after which the lot was drawn forth; and it fell on W. Yarle, who was then received as separated by the Lord. Whereupon the elders prayed over him; and laid their hands on him: appointing him to the office of a deacon in the church." F. S. R. pp. 374,375.--This appeal to heaven was, in those days, practised by other denominations. In 1682, Mr. F. Bampfield and his congregation, being looking out for a proper meeting-house, had the offer of three. Not, being able to agree as to the eligibility of any one, they "laid aside their own prudential determinings; and, after they had besought the Lord to choose for them, did refer the determining of it wholly unto him." Accordingly the lots were given forth; one for each place: and "that they might not limit the sovereign will of the Allwise, a fourth blank. Having agreed upon one to draw the lot, they all looked up to the God of heaven, expecting his allotment. The lot, being opened, spoke Pinner's Hall.--Bampfield's *Lord's Free Prisons*.]

In choosing their elders, they had more regard to the moral and religious character and attainments of the candidate, than to his literary rank or acquirements. In order to qualify a person for nomination to this office, he must have given full evidence of his conversion to God, and his devotedness to his service--have been an honourable member of some regular general baptist church, and have adorned his profession by a suitable life and conversation. He must, also, have proved his ministerial gifts, by exercising them before his brethren--have received their approbation--and been by them called forth to preach the gospel. Indeed, so careful were they to prevent improper persons from intruding into the sacred office, that, in some churches, it was the custom to subject those who had been elected to it, before they were ordained, to an examination by experienced ministers, both as to their moral character, and the extent and soundness of their religious knowledge.--But in this, as in all other respects, they regulated their conduct by the scriptures. "It is nowhere said," observes J. Hooke, "in the word of God, 'Let a bishop be an academic, a rhetorician, a logician, or a graduate;' but it is said, 'A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach,' &c. And when we find men thus qualified according to the mind of God, whether they have or not been bred at the university." [Conf. 1611. Art. 21.--Conf. of 1660. Arts. 5 and 15. Orthodox Creed, Art. 31.--Somersetshire Conf. xxiii. 8-12. Grantham's *Christ. Prim. Book II. Part II. Chap. 8.* Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, p. 58.--Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, p. 98.--Stanley's *Christianity Indeed*, p. 26.]

The baptists, as a body, but especially the general baptists, have been constantly been represented as enemies to a learned ministry; and as professing a contempt for erudition and science. (Mosheim. Vol. IV. p. 179.) It may, therefore, be just to permit them to explain their own views on the subject. "We readily grant, that learning of the languages, to wit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, &c. may be useful in its place, as a servant to help: but to make it a qualification absolutely necessary to the being of a minister, we dare not. Our reasons are: 1. Because the gospel was at first preached and brought forth into the world by unlearned men;--such were the apostles. 2. Because amongst the many qualifications

required, in the scriptures, to be found in those that are set apart to the work and office of all elder, we never find this recorded as one. 3. Because experience testifies, that men, unlearned in the languages, have been very useful in the Lord's hand, and famous instruments for the good of souls. 4. Because, in all ages, learned men have introduced and defended the errors of popery, and persecuted the true christians." Somerset. Conf. xxiii. 11. "Let none mistake me," says the pious J. Hooke, "as though I should despise human learning; as some have done in a passionate zeal because of its abuses, and others through sottish ignorance, being themselves strangers to it:--No, I love and honour human learning, and give it my approbation: only I would not have more ascribed to it than is due; nor by any means that it should be preferred above divine learning; but only attend upon it as a servant." *Necessary Apology*, p. 62. It would be easy, had we room, to shew that these were the general sentiments of the denomination.

But a person, though chosen to be an elder by the suffrages of his brethren, was not permitted to exercise the functions of his office, till he had, been regularly set apart by "fasting and prayer, with the imposition of hands." The ordination was a season of peculiar solemnity. The whole congregation were called to unite in the devotions and duties of the day; and neighbouring elders, and, frequently messengers, were invited to assist at the important transaction. Nor was it uncommon for sister congregations to hold a solemn assembly, at the same time, to wrestle with the great Head of the church, by fasting and prayer, to crown a connection so interesting to his cause on the earth, with his blessing. And, in all this, they followed, as they thought, the directions of the New Testament. Good Mr. Grantham produces scriptural precedents for the ordination. of persons to all the three offices:--of a messenger, Acts 13:3; of an elder, Acts 15:23; and, of a deacon, Acts 6:5, 6. [Grantham's *Christ. Prim. ubi. supra.*]

This connection, once formed, was esteemed sacred. Seldom do we read of their pastors removing from one church to another. The urgency must have been great that could, in their opinion, have justified such a step. Some of them seem to have thought the union thus formed indissoluble; except in case of the elder's apostacy from the truth. It was resolved, by the Lincolnshire Association, July 28th. 1695, "That there is nothing which we can justly fix upon, that can warrant an elder to forsake his people: nor can any elder, who has gone away from his own people, be established as in elder over another people in another place." The same assembly also determined, that an elder, "for a sinful life, or for teaching false doctrine, might be put from his office:" and that, "though, after his fall, he should prove a sound and good man, he may be taken into the place as a member, but not act in another place in the capacity of an elder." This appears to have been a sentiment commonly adopted by the general baptists at that time:--of such importance to the cause of religion did they esteem the character of its ministers; and so awfully injurious their failings." [Lincoln. Assoc. Book. F.S.R. p. 303.]

Many of these good men appear to have served the church gratuitously, both in the offices of messengers and elders. This was peculiarly the case in the former part of the century of which we are treating: and might be more necessary in the infancy of the churches. [Most of their ministers carried on business: and it is evident, from their earliest records, that they seldom received any thing from the congregation, except traveling

expences, &c. And when the increase of the cause, and other circumstances, rendered it necessary to contribute to their support, it was, in many places, yielded to with great reluctance. So late as 1679, it was considered, at Berkhamstead, as a crime worthy of church censure, to affirm "that men ought to have a set maintenance, by the year, for preaching."--B.C.B. 1679.] But they always maintained the right of a minister to receive a maintenance from those among whom he laboured: though they disclaimed any compulsion in the procuring of it. "The ministers of Christ," they say, "who have freely received from God, ought freely to minister to others: and such as have spiritual things ministered unto them ought freely to communicate necessary things to the ministers, upon the account of their charge: but tithes, or any forced maintenance, we utterly deny to be the maintenance of gospel ministers." [Conf. 1660, Art. 16.--See also Orthodox Creed, Art. 31.--Somerset. Conf. Ch. xxiii. Art. 18.--Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 99-102.--Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part. II. Ch. 15. Stanley's *Christianity Indeed*, pp. 136-149.]

These general baptists, it seems, were too inattentive to this necessary duty; probably in consequence of many of their first ministers having waived their claim, and gone the warfare at their own charges. This occasioned a very sensible and earnest expostulation on the subject from the zealous F. Stanley [*Christ. Prim.* Book 11. Part II. p. 181]; and drew forth this gentle admonition from Mr. Grantham. "Let the baptized churches be exhorted to consider, that, while others have exceeded, they have been too short, in caring for their ministers: who, though they, have, generally, with great cheerfulness, served them in the gospel of God freely; yet that will not justify the churches in the neglect of their duty. And besides, the ministers are rendered, by this neglect, the less capable to serve them: being much diverted, by worldly employments, from that serious study and exercise of reading which ordinarily conduces much to the furtherance of the gospel, by the more ample preaching thereof. For, if Paul advises Timothy to this course of reading and study, to the intent that he might shew himself a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, who was undoubtedly a man of rare parts; how much more Should we, who come so far short of him, in all likelihood, stir up ourselves to that needful exercise."

[* Ubi supra. This active minister laboured long in his Master's cause, without being chargeable to any, except for common entertainment: he could, therefore, plead the cause of his less able associates with the greater freedom. He states it, on his own knowledge, that "some ministers had spent a great part of their outward substance in the service of the churches--some their all, and some more than their all: many being reduced to the affecting strait, either to neglect the worthy work of the gospel, or else to be reputed worse than infidels." 1 Tim. 5:8.]

SECT. 7.--Public Worship--Psalmody--the Lord's Supper--Fast Days--Raising up Ministers.

A church being thus formed, and officers chosen, they were prepared to exert themselves for promoting the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, in the conversion of

sinners, and the edification of saints. Let us inquire how they prosecuted this great design.

Their first care was to provide for the due observance of the Lord's-day for they thought that every christian church, according to the example of Christ's disciples, and the primitive churches, ought, upon every first day of the week, to assemble together, to pray, prophesy, and break bread, and to perform all other parts of spiritual communion, for the worship of God, their own mutual edification, and the preservation of piety and true religion in the church. And they ought not to labour in their callings according to the equity of the moral law; which Christ came, not to abolish, but to fulfil." [Conf. 1611, Art. 19.] "The christian sabbath," they say, "is to be kept after a due and reverent manner, in preparing our hearts, and ordering our affairs so before-hand, that we may rest that day from worldly and carnal employments, and frequent the solemn assemblies of the church: and in all public and private duties of religion, as hearing, meditating, and conferring, and reading of the holy scriptures: together with prayer, public, and private; and in the duties of necessity, charity, and mercy; and not in any vain or worldly discourse, or idle recreations whatsoever." Christian assemblies," says the pious Grantham, "whether for the public preaching of the gospel to the multitude, or for the more particular edification of the church, are both grounded upon the doctrine and practice of Christ himself; and therefore may, in no wise, be neglected by the church, nor contradicted or opposed by men: such assemblies being the most sacred conventions upon the earth, of greatest authority, and concerned in the most important affairs, even the thing's concerning the kingdom of God." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part II. Ch. 5.]

Such were the sentiments of these professors respecting the nature and importance of assemblies for public worship: and the wilful neglect of them was considered as disorderly conduct, which called for the censure of the church. A constant inspection was exercised over the attendance of the members: persons were appointed to take down the names of the absentees, and report them to the elders; and nothing but reasons of obvious importance were admitted as a sufficient apology for their non-attendance. When the societies grew numerous, the members were ranged into districts, according, to the proximity of their habitations: and proper persons appointed to superintend each district. If any member did not appear in his place, on the Lord's-day, he was certain of a visit, in the course of the week, from one of the inspectors of the district, to call him to account for his absence. These regulations were rendered effectual, by being acted upon with steadiness, impartiality, and decision; and, for nearly a century, contributed much to the order and prosperity of the general baptist churches.*

[* In 1655, an "Order" was made, by the general consent of the congregation at Fenstanton, that "if any member of this congregation shall absent himself from the assembly of the same congregation, upon the first day of the week, without manifesting a sufficient cause, he shall be looked upon as an offender, and proceeded with accordingly. At the same meeting, it was devised, that, if any member should, at any time, have any extraordinary occasion to hinder him from the assembly, he would certify the congregation of the same before hand, for the prevention of jealousy." (F.S.R. p. 190). And, in 1658, the same society, after considering the case of a wife who had been kept

back, by the threatenings of her husband, concluded "that, unless a person was restrained by force, it was no excuse for absenting himself from the assemblies of the congregation." FSA P. 373. Resolutions of a similar purport are frequent in the records of these churches; and numbers of cases prove that they were constantly enforced. In the articles of union between the churches; at Paul's-alley and Turner's hall. in 1695, it was agreed, that "the public worship in the congregation, on the Lord's-day, be thus performed: viz. In the morning, about half-past nine, some brother be appointed to begin the exercises, by reading a psalm, and spending some time in prayer; and then reading some other portions of the holy scriptures till the minister comes into the pulpit, and, after the preaching and prayer, to conclude with singing a psalm. The afternoon service to begin at half-past one; and to be carried on and concluded as in the forenoon; but, on breaking of bread days, the psalm to be omitted, in the afternoon, till the conclusion of the Lord's Supper." See the Records of Barbican Church.--This, which, with the exception of the singing, may be considered as a fair description of the usual mode in which these general baptists conducted public worship, proves, that the omission of reading the scriptures, of which Mr. Whiston complains, did not exist at the period of which we are treating. Indeed, if we may trust Mr. Killingworth, the commission was very partial even in his day; as he assures us, that, the scriptures were read in all the Norfolk and London churches, and in all other churches, of which he had any knowledge.--Whiston's *Memoirs*, Vol. II. p. 480. Killingworth's Letter to Whiston.]

Their public worship is described as consisting of prayer, reading the scriptures, prophecy, and praise. The first two still retain their place, in our christian assemblies; and the third was, in a good measure, similar to the modern preaching. But the reader must not confound the last with the psalmody of our congregations. These rigid scripturists thought, that they could find neither precept nor example, in the New Testament, for the whole congregation, converted and unconverted, joining in singing as a part of divine worship, the pre-composed poem of men, nor even the psalms of David translated into English metre, to tunes adapted to them by the art of the musician, and previously learned by the singer. They esteemed all this as a relic of the cathedral service of the catholics and prelatists; and conscientiously preserved a jealous distance from imitating it. But, as praising God is a duty enjoined both by reason and scripture, they did not omit it. It is not easy to convey a clear idea of the exercise which they substituted in the room of singing; but we will let them explain it themselves.

"The best, and, for aught I can find, the only certain and undoubted way to be used, in christian churches, to sing the praises of the Lord, is this:--That such persons as God hath gifted to tell forth his mighty acts, and to recount his special providences, and upon whose hearts God hath put a lively sense of present mercies, should have their liberty and convenient opportunity to celebrate the high praises of God, one by one, in, the churches of God: and that with such words as the nature of the matter and present occasion require; so that they be careful to keep to the language of the sacred word, and as near as may be to the methods of those psalms and hymns used aforetime by the holy writers of the scriptures: and that all this be done with a pleasant or cheerful voice, that may serve to express the joys conceived in the heart of him that singeth; the better to affect the hearts of all the congregation with the wondrous works of God, and the continual goodness

which he sheweth towards the children of men, and especially to his people. And thus he that hath a psalm becomes an useful minister in the house of God; whilst as others wait on their gifts; whether it be prayer, teaching, exhortation, &c.: so he waits on his gifts also; being as studious to find out acceptable words, and to set his hymns and psalms in good order, for common edification, as the wise preacher is careful, to the same intent, about his doctrine or sermon. 'Let all things be done to edifying.'"

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, several general baptist congregations adopted, though by slow degrees, the present mode of psalmody: but this was esteemed, by others, a culpable innovation. Several churches were divided on this subject: and, in others, when a majority had introduced the custom, the discontented, for a long time, went out of the place when the singing commenced. Many intemperate pamphlets were published by both parties, and much discord was sown among brethren: and the dispute continued to rage till long after the close of the period of which we are treating. [In 1696, Mr. Allen, minister of Paul's-alley church, published "An Essay to prove singing of psalms, with conjoined voices, a christian duty;" which was answered, in the same year, by the famous Dr. W. Russell, in "Some brief animadversions upon Mr. Allen's Essay." This author thus describes the unhappy effects which were produced by the introduction of this practice. "This way of singing has a tendency to your ruin having begun already to diminish your numbers, and force two congregations to unite into one, to keep up their reputation, and supply that deficiency which singing in rhyme has made in their numbers. Nay, further: a great part of your members that remain are so dissatisfied, that, as soon as you begin to tune your pipes, they immediately depart like men affrighted." p. 12.--Probably Dr. R. refers to Mr. Allen's own church, in Paul's. alley. When the society from Turner's-hall united with that church in 1695, it was agreed, probably in compliment to Mr. Allen, that one psalm should be sung, at each opportunity of Public worship: and this was sung at the conclusion of the service, to give those who disapproved of it an opportunity of withdrawing, It was not till 1719, that they ventured to sing twice in the afternoon service.--A dispute on this subject in the particular baptist church under Mr. B. Keach, occasioned a division in 1691, which gave rise to the church in Maze pond, Southwark.--Wilson, Vol. III. p. 230. Vol. IV. p. 285.]

Another important part of their religious services was, the celebration of the Lord's supper: which they considered as "the outward manifestation of the spiritual communion between Christ and the faithful, mutually to declare his death, until he come." They believed that it was appointed by the great Head of the church: and adapted to teach christians humility, love, unity, and stability in the faith; and to excite them to labour after those qualifications which fit them for the worthy participation of this solemn feast. True believers, only, they thought, had a right to this ordinance; and no unbaptized, unbelieving, openly wicked, or heretical person ought to be admitted to it. It could not, as many of them asserted, be regularly administered by any but the pastor; because he alone is commanded to feed that flock, and that only, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer. It does not appear, that they were uniform as to the periods of celebrating this ordinance: but many of the churches had it once a month. "Had the precise time," says Mr. Grantham, "been limited in scripture, such times must have been sacred as well as the service: but here the wisdom of God thought not fit to impose any thing.

Nevertheless, as the natural man will not long abstain from his bodily food, if he can obtain it; so neither will the spiritual man neglect his Father's table: but delight to feed with those that call on the name of the Lord in that solemnity." With these views, it is no wonder that these christians reckoned a regular attendance at the Lord's table, not only an invaluable privilege, but an indispensable duty; and the unnecessary neglect of it a fault worthy of serious censure. To prevent this, in many churches, the names of the members were called over, at the close of every celebration: and absentees marked for future animadversion. [Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part. II. Chap. 7.--The Amersham church ordered, that a fair list of the names of the members be kept in readiness--that the names be called over after the breaking of bread--and brother Young and brother Reading, take a strict notice of the members that are missing, at the Lord's table, and admonish them to be more circumspect.--A. C. B.]

In their proceedings respecting this solemn ordinance, they endeavoured to make the scripture their only guide. Thus they generally called it "breaking of bread," or the Lord's supper and avoided the terms sacrament, eucharist,, &c. as unauthorized by the New Testament. Thus, also, because our Lord and his disciples sat, at the institution of it, they durst not kneel: and, because our Lord broke the bread, they refused to cut it. Nor did they venture to approach the, Lord's table fasting; as some, who pretended to superior reverence, were in the habit of doing, because it was first instituted after eating the paschal lamb. This circumstance, indeed, led several churches, at their first rise, in order more exactly to imitate the primitive model, to have a supper together, before the celebration of this ordinance. The general baptists at Fenstanton as we have seen, pleaded for it on the ground of convenience rather than duty; as an accommodation for brethren from a distance, rather than as necessary to due administration of the ordinance. Many others, however, were more rigid: but it seems to have been nearly laid aside before the close of the seventeenth century. [The enemies of these professors took occasion from this practice, to fix on the advocates for it the ludicrous designation of Legs-of-Mutton baptists: "so named because at the celebration of the Lord's supper, as they pretended, they sat down at table and feasted upon legs of mutton and other meats," D'Assigny's *Mystery of Anabaptism.* p. 227. But this author, in 1709, could only hear of one congregation of them; and, had not modern historians revived the term without the explication, this harmless witticism might very properly have remained buried in the rubbish in which it was found.]

In addition to these regular seasons of social worship, many of these christians thought, that public humiliation, by fasting and prayer, is an ordination of God, appointed for his church and people:" [Orthodox Creed Art. 412. Grantham's *Christ. Prim.* Book II. Part II. Chap. II.] and, therefore, had frequent seasons appropriated for those exercises. True fasting, in their opinion, consisted in a total abstinence from food, pleasure, and labour, for a limited time, usually from six in the morning, to six in the evening; which was spent in reading the scriptures, solemn prayer, and preaching accompanied with acts of charity and Mercy. These exercises always attended the election and ordination of the officers of the church and were often held on various other occasions. The objects to be kept in view were distinctly enumerated, when the fast was appointed; and related to the nation, the neighbourhood, the church or individuals. Thus, in 1676, the church at Amersham held a

fast, the objects of which are thus recorded. 1. That the Lord be pleased to humble us under a sense of our brother Rudrup's miscarriage, and that we may be more watchful in future. 2. To bewail the divisions that are among God's people; and to seek for a spirit of love, unity, illumination, and obedience.--3. To pray that the Lord would be pleased to continue a seasonable harvest.--4. To intreat him to prevent all the wicked designs, which the enemies of the truth are devising, against those that fear the Lord.--5. To beseech him to support our sister Child under her heavy trials.--6. To beg that he would sanctify the affliction that is on Mary Hill; and give his blessing on her journey to the bath for her recovery." Such were the cases which these zealous christians presented at a throne of grace, on these solemn occasions; and the Lord was sometimes graciously pleased to grant signal answers to their prayers. These frequent seasons of humiliation, prayer and intercession, most have had a happy tendency to nourish sympathy and charity towards each other, and piety and devotion towards God. [In the records of the church at Fair-street, is this entry, under date of November 1st. 1697. "Whereas it was requested by sister Wood, whose daughter lies in a deplorable condition, that we keep a day of fasting and prayer to God; we agree that Friday next be kept, at her house, from eight in the morning till four at night." This day was accordingly observed; and, at the next church meeting they ordered January 21st. ensuing to be kept as a day of thanksgiving, because that it had "pleased the Lord mightily to appear, hearing his people's prayer, and delivering the maid, in a marvellous manner." S.T.C.B. "that Mary Cox, was greatly afflicted with heavy temptations, it was desired by her and her parents, that a day should be set apart by fasting, to seek the Lord on her behalf: which was consented unto." F.S.R. And, with regard to the fast, at Amersham, mentioned in the text, it is pleasing to read this minute of a subsequent church meeting. "The ninth of the eighth month, the church kept as a day of thanksgiving to almighty God; because he was pleased to give most of the things which we had been seeking to him for by fasting and prayer." Numerous instances of a similar nature occur in the records of these churches, but these will suffice to give an idea of their proceedings in such cases.]

It may not be improper to close this account of their public worship with a few hints on the means they used to raise up a succession of acceptable ministers to conduct it.

They had no universities, colleges, or academies to supply them with ministers: but they "believed it to be the duty of christians earnestly to desire spiritual gifts, but especially that they might prophesy:" and, that "every church of Christ ought to be a nursery, to nurse up and cherish gifts among themselves, and to embrace any among them, whether learned or unlearned, that were likely to be useful in the Lord's work." With this view, they adopted various plans for the discovery and cultivation of ministerial abilities. During the civil wars, they seem to have had stated public exercises for the discussion of religious subjects, in which any one was at liberty to propose and defend his own opinion; but these exercises soon gave way to less objectionable modes of exciting the latent abilities of the brethren. Regular meetings for prayer, religious conferences and the expounding of the scriptures, were encouraged in the different churches: one great object of which was, to bring forward to notice the various gifts of those who engaged in them. Thus the general baptists at Spalding agreed, "That we will meet together every Wednesday evening; to seek the lord by prayer and supplication: and that our brethren, as

many of them as, can, lay out themselves in such a manner for the Lord, as seems most to answer the gifts given them of the Lord; that so a discovery may be made of that precious treasure of preaching and expounding the word, which, it is hoped, may tend to the glorifying of our heavenly Father, and the edifying of one another." And, in the church at Shad Thames, the younger brethren were encouraged to assemble, at the meeting-house, every Lord's-day morning, "to improve their spiritual gifts and graces, to the edification of such as should give them attendance." [S. T. C. B, 1681.]

When, at these private meetings, any brother gave indications of possessing promising abilities, it was reported to the church-meeting, and he was desired to exercise his gifts before the brethren. After a proper trial, he was, if approved, called to the work of the ministry. At first, he was employed only occasionally; and styled "a gifted brother:" but if his conduct and abilities merited encouragement, he soon became more regularly engaged in the sacred work, and was designated "a brother confirmed in the ministry." In most churches there were two or three of the latter description; and, sometimes, a considerable number of "gifted brethren." [F.S.R. p. 146.]

This mode of proceeding was well adapted for the discovery, trial, and improvement of real ministerial abilities, and to guard against the forwardness of those who only imagined that they possessed them. For it was held unlawful for any one, who had not been approved by the church, to preach publicly to the world. And there are many instances, in their records, of persons being censured, and even excluded, for disobedience to this regulation. [The following advices, respecting the calling forth of ministers, were given by the General Assembly, in reply to a case from Burnham: and may be considered as an epitome of the proceedings of their party on this subject.-- 1. Every brother who concludes that he hath a gift to be improved, for the benefit of the church, ought to be permitted to express the same in private meetings for approbation.--2. Every such brother ought to submit to the judgment of the church, to improve his gift when and where they shall think meet.--3. If upon such a brother's exercising his gift, for sometime, the major part of the church do approve it, and desire him, by his gift, to serve the church, we think he is then lawfully called to the work, and ought to do it.--4. But, if the major part do not think him so gifted as to preach publicly, then he and the minor part of the church are to be content with his private exercise; until the Lord shall please to indue him with greater ability for the public ministry.--5. But if the brother approved by the major part be called to the public ministry, the minor part ought not to discourage such a brother, either by word or actions; but to keep their places, and quietly sit down under a minister so approved.--6. Those who wilfully absent themselves from the meeting, when some brother so approved preaches, to the grief and discouragement of such brother, act disorderly, and are worthy of reproof.--7. We look upon it to be the duty of every member to love and encourage every gifted brother, and to pray for him, with all seriousness: which maybe the means to prevail with God to enlarge his gifts, and to send forth more labourers." Minutes of Gen. Assembly, 1704.]

SECT. 8.--The Discipline exercised in the General Baptist Churches, to prevent Offences, and correct Offenders.

The general baptists of the seventeenth century considered Christ as the sole Governor of his church; and the precepts of the New Testament as the only rules of discipline. They, therefore, transacted all affairs of the church in his name: and, as far as they could judge, according to His laws. All their records, which have fallen under our notice, afford pleasing evidence of this: for scarcely any decision of moment is entered, without a reference to the texts of scripture on which it is founded.

They also believed, that the church, as a body, was the only interpreter of the will of its great Legislator: and alone competent to decide questions relating to his cause. "Mind well," says W. Jeffery, "the power to judge differences, and to deal with members, lies In the body, the church; not in the officers distinct or apart from the church. This plainly appears from Matt. 18:17. 1 Cor. 5:1-6. Mark 10:43, 44." [*Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 107, 108. Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, p. 88. Stanley's *Christianity Indeed*, p.90.] They were, therefore, anxious that as many of the members as possible should attend at their meetings for discipline: and esteemed a neglect of them, unless for very urgent reasons, as worthy of serious animadversion, Thus the church at Canterbury agreed, in 1668, "that in case any member neglect such meetings as are appointed for discipline, they shall send the cause by some member, that day; or otherwise declare it themselves the next first day: and upon the failure of this, the person shall be reprobable." [P. I. from Canterbury church Book.]

Their discipline may be considered as either preventive or corrective. The one designed by a vigilant oversight, to preserve the members from acting inconsistently with their high vocation: and the other, to reclaim such as had been led astray, or to clear the church from any participation in the guilt or disgrace of their wanderings.

We have already seen, that, for the purpose of effectual superintendance, their societies, when they became too numerous for the inspection of the pastor alone, were divided into small districts. To each of these districts were appointed proper overseers, for the express purpose of "taking particular care of each member in their respective divisions, of their conversation and carriage--to take a strict notice what disorders may arise, and bring them regularly before the monthly church. meeting." In some congregations, each of the deacons undertook the superintendance of a district, and chose an experienced brother to assist him: but, in others, a number of distinct officers were chosen for this service, under the denomination of "Helps in government." [See Biddenden Church Book, 1678.--The business of these helps in government is more concisely described, in another place, thus--"to look over and take care of the congregation in respect of their inward and outward condition--that is, to see how it stands between God and their souls, and how it is with them in respect of their outward wants." Ibid. 1686.]

Monthly meetings were regularly held in most Churches, for the transaction of the usual business of the society: and a general meeting, every three months, for the purpose of inquiring into the character and conduct of the members.

The strictness with which a regular attendance on the means of grace, and at the church-meetings was enforced, as been already noticed. The same vigilance was exercised over

the conduct of the members, in their families, in their business, in their connections in civil society and even in their recreations. When anything was observed contrary to the dictates of christianity or morality, it was immediately checked by the affectionate remonstrances of these Inspectors. This well-timed opposition to the beginnings of disorder, before principles were weakened or habits formed, must frequently have produced a most happy effect in restoring the wanderer to the paths of virtue. If any impropriety of conduct, or heresy in sentiment, was suspected to be insinuating itself among the people, the suspicion was soon reported to a church-meeting, where the error was examined, exposed, and condemned. Sometimes, not content with this private opposition, they desired their ministers to attack the intruder from the pulpit. As the members in general attended these meetings, and had a right to deliberate and vote on every subject, they were not only strengthened against the danger by the arguments of their brethren; but exposed themselves to self-condemnation if they acted contrary to the decisions in which they had joined. Nor were the ministers themselves exempt from this inspection. The superior importance of their character subjected their moral character to a more rigorous observation: and if any thing escaped from them in preaching, which was judged contrary to the scriptures, they were amenable to the same tribunal; and obliged to defend or retract their doctrines before the congregation.*

[* The following extracts, which might easily have been extended to ten times their number, will illustrate and confirm the observation, in the text.

In 1656, some of the members of the church at Fenstanton, had contracted a habit of going occasionally to hear the clergy of the establishment, and the practice appeared to gain ground. It was, therefore, brought before the church-meeting, when "the congregation entered into a debate on the business: and it was at length resolved--that it is unlawful for any member of this congregation to hear the teachers of the church of England, unless to reprove them." F.S.R. 304.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the Kentish general baptists seem to have paid too little attention to the preservation of peace among themselves, and to have indulged too freely in dress and show. This being observed by the society at Bessell's-green, a church-meeting was held July 9th, 1697, when it was resolved.--1. That differences between brethren be speedily reconciled.--2. That all superfluity of apparel be laid aside, and that there be a moderation in all things;--3. That it be publicly preached down in the congregation; and that fathers and masters of families endeavour to suppress it." But these means did not, it appears, wholly remove the evil; for, at a subsequent meeting, April 11th. 1698, they adopted still stronger language. "Agreed, that the soul-condemning sin of pride be utterly extirpated and rooted out that all the discriminating characters thereof, to wit, superfluity of apparel, &c. be utterly extinguished." B.G.C.B. 1697, 1698.

In 1678, a minister of the church at Shad-Thames was accused of preaching heresy. The affair was brought before the congregation, and he was "desired to come to the church and vindicate his doctrine, or be reclaimed from so great an error." The minister obeyed;

and, after a full investigation, was acquitted: and the person who brought the charge was treated as "a false accuser," and ordered to make satisfaction." S.T.C.B. 1678.]

But, notwithstanding all this laudable care to prevent offences, yet cases would frequently occur which called for the exercise of discipline. Such is the proneness of our nature to evil, that no church, though collected with the greatest care, and superintended the most vigilant manner, can long expect to be exempt from disorders in conversation, or errors in sentiment. The records of these societies prove, that, they were composed of fallen and imperfect mortals.

In cases of private offences of one brother against another, they rigorously enforced the mode prescribed in Matt. 18:15, 16, 17. They thought, that when the great Head of the church had condescended to give such explicit directions, it was highly presumptuous not to pay a sacred regard to them. If, therefore, a complaint of this nature was brought to the church, before the previous steps, directed by our Saviour, had been taken, it was firmly rejected: and the complainant ordered, first, to perform his own duty, and then, if there should be a necessity, to bring forward his accusation. This steady adherence to the divine injunctions had the desired effect: and their records afford few instances of personal offences being brought before the congregation. Yet sometimes the offending party was stubborn, or the offended unreasonable; and neither private expostulation, nor the intervention of friends, could effect a reconciliation. An appeal to the church then became necessary, and, the complaint having been received, a day was appointed to hear both parties. If, after due investigation, the church concluded that a trespass had been committed, the offender was required to make satisfaction to his offended brother. If he complied, his sin was remitted, and he retained his fellowship: but, in case of refusal to obey the decree of the church, he was, after three admonitions, excluded; and "counted a heathen man and a publican."

In some difficult cases of personal offences, a committee of judicious persons were appointed, to investigate the circumstances, and report the result to the church. And when the assertions of the parties concerned contradicted each other, and no other evidence could be obtained, they thought it "the churches' duty and liberty to appeal to the God of Heaven, by casting lots, and making serious supplication to him, that he would be pleased to order and dispose of the lot for their direction; to shew which of the two was the guilty person:" and when the Lord had thus discovered him, they proceeded against the person on whom the lot fell as certainly guilty. [Stanley's *Christianity Indeed*, p. 95.]

But the most numerous class of offenders were such as sinned, not against one another, but against the Lord: for they esteemed all acts of dishonesty, intemperance, or immorality, as sins against God himself. These were reckoned public offences; and it was thought necessary, that the punishment should be prompt and signal. When any member, therefore, discovered that a brother or sister was guilty of an offence of this nature, he was expected to take the earliest opportunity of stating it to the congregation. Had he neglected, or even delayed, to do this, he should have been blamed for suffering sin on his brother, for obstructing his recovery, and for bringing the church into communion with the sinner. [Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, p. 104.] But, in order to guard against

frivolous or malicious accusations, the accuser was required to state the charge in writing, signed with his own name. [These written, accusations were sometimes very laconic. The following is a literal copy of one which was presented to the church at Dockhead, December 11th. 1704, "Sir, I accuse Mrs. S----- of swearing, and lying, and backbiting, and ingratitude. Eliz. Dickes." The charges, however, were proved; and Mrs. S. dismissed from the society. S.T.C.B.]

A copy of this charge was handed to the accused, who was summoned to attend at the next meeting for discipline: or, if the facts were very serious and scandalous, at a special meeting held for the purpose of considering them. On the appointed day, the case was solemnly investigated and judgment given. If the crime was proved, to the satisfaction of the church, the offender was solemnly excluded from the society. But, if he professed penitence, and submitted to the decision of the church, after a sufficient time had been given to prove his sincerity, and nothing had transpired inconsistent with his professions, he was re-admitted to communion. Yet, in all cases of notorious scandal, it was thought necessary to vindicate the honour of religion, that the separation of the offender from the congregation should be openly announced to the world. in the course of public worship: but, when the sins were of a more private nature, it was thought sufficient to notify it, to the church only, at the Lord's table.

[Of all the offences of a public nature, that which occupied their attention the most frequently and gave them the greatest trouble was "marrying out of the church." They had observed that, in all the dispensations of the church, the patriarchal, the Abrahamic and the Mosaic, the Lord had confirmed marriage within the bounds of that dispensation. they believed, that the apostles had adopted this restriction into the system of christianity; and that therefore it was binding on them. Judging that the general estimation which the scripture makes of believers, is that they are members of the visible church; and esteeming their own to be the only truly constituted churches, it was always a rule, that those who joined them should not marry any person who was not a member of some of their societies. Marrying, therefore, out of the faith, was esteemed an aggravated fault: because it was committed against the laws of God, the declared judgment of the church, and the offender's own agreement when he joined their society. Such offences were, however, daily occurring; and they were much puzzled how to proceed with the culprits. To require the parties to separate after they were married would have been highly improper; and to leave the delinquent in a state of excommunication, without the hope of reconciliation, would have been very severe. They, therefore, accepted the profession of repentance from the offender, if attested by suitable conduct; and, in due time, restored him to communion. Minutes of the Gen. Assembly 1704. *Biddenden Church Book*, 1657, &c. &c.]. With those, however, who refused to hear the church, the discipline proceeded. If the offender attended the church-meeting, and justified his conduct, in opposition to the decision of his brethren, he was, in the presence of the whole congregation, seriously and earnestly admonished of the guilt he had contracted, and affectionately urged to repentance. If he still persisted, he was suspended from all the privileges of the church, and the business postponed till the next meeting, But when the accused did not attend the summons, and appear in his place, at the time appointed, it was considered as an aggravation of his crime: and to the list of charges already exhibited, was added that of

"slighting the church." Messengers were sent to admonish him, to exhort him to repentance, and warn him to attend the next meeting for discipline.

After three admonitions, of this serious nature, had been sent at proper intervals, without effect, the church proceeded to what they termed "the ordinance of excommunication." This was, with, them, a very affecting transaction. The elder, by the authority of the church, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, using the apostolic language, solemnly "delivered the offender to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord." When the party was present, this sentence was pronounced in the face of the whole assembly; and accompanied with serious prayer, and earnest and affectionate expostulations with the fallen brother. If he refused to attend, messengers were deputed by the church, to seek him out, and pronounce the sentence on him personally: tendering him, at the same time, an admonition to repentance.

Another description of offenders, which frequently occupied their attention, at their meetings for discipline, were such as held, or were suspected to hold, heretical opinions. For, however lax in sentiment the general baptists of later times might be, it is certain that, during the seventeenth century, they were sufficiently rigid. They believed that the injunction of the apostle to Titus [Titus 3:10,11], made it the duty of every true christian church to reject heretics: and, with their usual alacrity, they endeavoured to follow the precepts of that great master-builder. In some cases, perhaps, they pushed their proceedings with too much rigor; yet they evinced an ardent love to truth, and a sincere desire to do the will of God. Their records abound with proceedings against such as entertained the doctrines of the quakers, or the high calvinists, or denied the divinity or humanity of Christ. The mode of proceeding was very similar to that with public offenders and the sentence was the same:--they delivered obstinate heretics to Satan. [Some of the members of the church at Fenstanton, in 1655, had turned to the quakers, and J. Denne and E. Mayle were sent by the congregation to excommunicate them. One of the apostates insisted that the church had no authority to deliver persons to Satan, for errors in doctrine, but, only for immoral conduct: according to 1 Cor. 5:14. The messengers desired him to read 1 Tim. 1:19, 20: which when he had done, they replied: "Thou hast read the cause of thy condemnation: for thou art delivered unto Satan for the same cause, even for making shipwreck of faith and putting away a good conscience. Wherefore from henceforth keep silence: for out of thine own mouth art thou judged and condemned." F. S. R. 199.]

But, it ought to be observed, that this solemn process was intended, by these christians, as a powerful means, under the influence of divine grace, of reclaiming the wanderer; bringing him to sincere repentance, and finally restoring him to his friends and his God. Equally anxious to shew their obedience to all the precepts of scripture, if they delivered a sinner to Satan, it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might, be saved in the day of the Lord [1 Cor. 5:5]. If they shunned his company, and avoided all intimacy with him; it was, that he might be ashamed of his sin, and turn from it:--they still counted him not as an enemy, but admonished him as a brother [2 Thess. 3:14,15]. These admonitions were continued long after the party had been excluded. Messengers were appointed from time to time, by the church, to search him out and exhort him to reflect

from whence he had fallen: to repent, and do his first works. These messages were constantly repeated, till death removed the unhappy object out of the reach of their good offices; or hardened and undisguised profligacy rendered the case hopeless. [A few of these christians thought that the church had a power of inflicting a higher kind of excommunication, which entirely cut the offender off from all possibility of reconciliation. This they expressed by the apostolic phrase, Anathema Maranatha; 1 Cor. 16:22. and considered it the highest act of authority committed to the church. But though they claim this power, yet they esteemed it highly dangerous for any society to attempt to exercise it, which could not infallibly judge of character (*Orthodox Creed*, Art. 34.)--The pious W. Jeffrey seems to have thought, that the excommunication inflicted after three properly conducted admonitions, out to be final (*Whole Faith of Man*, pp. 105,106). But these acts of discipline were most generally considered and employed as means of reclaiming the offender.]

It ought, also, to be remembered, that, though these churches were so liberal of their censures, yet they confined the effects wholly to spiritual penalties; and, by no means designed to injure the temporal circumstances of those whom they excommunicated. It formed a distinct article in their first creed, "that excommunicants, in respect of civil society, are not to be avoided:"* and the same principles regulated their future proceedings. They steadily maintained, that no man ought to suffer in his rights, as a member of civil society, on account of his religious sentiments: and that church censures respected only church privileges.

Such was the mode of dealing with offenders, adopted by the English general baptists of the seventeenth century. Some have censured it, as betraying too much of rigour and bigotry: but Dr. Wall, who, living in the midst of them, had a good opportunity of observing its progress and effects, mentions it with honour, as well deserving of commendation and imitation. After describing their method of treating personal offences, he adds, "As this is very much according to our Saviour's and St. Paul's direction in such cases; so I have been told that it has the good effect to prevent abundance of lawsuits, and end many quarrels: very few of them offering to withstand the general verdict and opinion of all their brethren. And there is no reason to doubt but that a like course would, if it were put in practice, have a like good effect among other societies of christians." And a little after, speaking, of their dealing with open sinners, he observes, "The like discipline, of renouncing brotherhood, they use against such of their communion as are known to be guilty of any such immorality as is a scandal to the christian profession of a sober and godly life: for which care of their members, there is no man but will commend them."

SECT. 9.--Their Care of the Poor--Method of solemnizing, Marriages--Washing Feet--Anointing with Oil--Miscellaneous Remarks.

Another part of the discipline of the English general baptists, regarded the maintenance of their poor; for which they were honourably distinguished. Dr. Wall says, "they were particularly commended for maintaining their poor liberally:" and ascribes the number of proselytes that joined them to the good-will of the multitude, which they gained by this

liberality. [*History of Inf. Baptism*, Vol. II. p. 216.] It is ranked in their Creeds, among the christian duties. "The deacons," say the Confessors of 1611, "are to relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren." [Conf. 1611, Art. 20.] "The poor saints," say Mr. Grantham and his associates, "belonging to the church of Christ, are to be sufficiently provided for by the churches, that they neither want food nor raiment: and this, by a free and voluntary contribution; and not of necessity, or by the constraint of the magistrate." [Conf. 1660, Art. 19.]

The deacons, whose peculiar duty it was to superintend this part of the concerns of the church, were required to look out for proper objects: and the poor were invited and encouraged to make their difficulties known to them. It was, indeed, esteemed disorderly to contract debts, before they had applied for relief to the church. It was the duty of the deacons to investigate the accuracy of the statements; and, if necessary, to recommend them to the church. Relief was then afforded, in proportion to the urgency of the case, or the ability of the society. When it was thought requisite, a weekly allowance was granted, which, sometimes, was very liberal, and was continued as long as the case required it." [In 1688, the church in White's-alley gave to one poor sister, six shillings weekly: a considerable sum at that time. In July, the following year, the regular pensions allowed, by the same church, to poor members, amounted to the sum of 1 pound 11 shillings weekly; exclusive of frequent occasional donations, to meet temporary demands: such as paying rent, purchasing winter fuel, discharging surgeon's bills, &c. &c. W. A. C. B.] Nor did they confine their benevolence to their own society. It not unfrequently happened, when the poor in a church were numerous, and the members few or indigent, that they recommended some of their needy friends to a more affluent congregation: from which they were allowed weekly pensions. [Thus, in the Records of the church, just named, we find entry. "June 2, 1690. Whereas brother Eades, a member at Dock-head, is in a very languishing condition, and that church is not in circumstances to relieve him, it is agreed, that we will allow him, at present, one shilling per week." W.A.C.B.] And, when the churches in any district were unable to support their own poor, they applied for assistance to the societies in other districts; and seldom applied in vain.

The funds for these benevolent purposes were raised from various sources. Some of these christians thought themselves obliged, in compliance with apostolic injunction [1 Cor. 16:1, 2] to lay aside, weekly, for the support of the poor, a certain proportion of their profits [Orthodox Creed, Art. 35]. The deacons were expected 'to admonish such of the members as appeared remiss or niggardly in their contributions; and, if they neglected to attend to the admonition, to bring them before the church. A collection, for the poor, was made, in many congregations, every week and, in most others, monthly, at the conclusion of the Lord's supper: and those members who were absent, on these occasions, were required to send their contributions. And, as the interest increased, opulent and benevolent persons left legacies, to many churches, for the use of the poor. But, it is much to be doubted, whether this produced any lasting benefit:--for successors, finding such a fund provided, felt less necessity for personal exertion: and lost, it is to be feared, much of the zeal of their worthy ancestors.

The best things may be abused; and even the laudable generosity of these churches encouraged imposition. So early as 1652, "some persons made it a trade to go front from place to seek relief:" and, it is very probable, that idle persons might sometimes unite themselves with their societies, with the sordid design of obtaining relief:" They were, however, apprised of this danger, and adopted various regulations, in the disposing of their bounty, well, adapted to guard against, its misapplication. [The church at Fenstanton, in 1652, adopted, on the motion of Mr. Denne, several resolutions on this subject, which appear to have been imitated, in a great degree, by most of the G.B. churches. The following are the following are the principal: "1. That it is the duty of persons that are in want, truly to declare their condition to the church or the deacons. 2. That after due examination had of the condition of any brother, by the deacons, they are to declare it to the congregation. 3. That if any one belonging to the congregation hath any in want, that are nearly allied to him, he shall, to the utmost of his ability, relieve them, and not suffer them to be burdensome to the church. 4. That no person shall, at any time, be relieved by the congregation, but such as, to the utmost of his ability, does use all lawful means for his subsistence. 5. That if the congregation are not able to relieve those that are in want among them, but are obliged to send to other congregations, for help, they will not send any person in want, either with or without a letter, to gather their liberality for himself, but will send a man that is not in want, of whose fidelity they have had experience., that he may receive their liberality, and bring it to the congregation. F. S. R. 23,--38.]

Closely connected with the discipline of these churches, was their method of solemnizing marriages. They esteemed marriage as highly important to society; and thought that it ought to be under the cognizance of the civil magistrate: and, had the state made regulations concerning it, unconnected with religious ceremonies, they would cheerfully have complied with them. But in the "form of matrimony directed by the service-book," they found, as they thought, much of superstition and popery, which they believed themselves obliged to witness against. They could not conceive, for 'instance, why the ring, must be laid on the service-book, and pass thro' the hands of the priest, before it was fit for the use intended: unless it was supposed to have gained some secret efficacy, or peculiar sanctification, by, the, operation. The introduction, also, of the sacred Three, on this occasion, shocked them: for they thought it dangerous to speak a word, much less perform a ceremony, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which he had not commanded. Nor could they understand how to worship their wives, to worship any creature, in the sacred name of God, appeared to them very suspicious: and though they acknowledged that there was a kind of civil worship due to superiors; yet, as the law of God and nature had made the man the superior in marriage, they "saw no occasion to unman themselves, to gratify a ceremony."

They, therefore, usually solemnized their marriages amongst themselves, in a manner very similar to that now adopted by the quakers.--When two persons, qualified according to the law of God and their country, with respect to the degrees of affinity, and their freedom from all other engagements, had agreed to unite in the marriage, state, it was required that they should give notice of' such intention to the church of which they were members, a sufficient time before the nuptials; that proper inquiries might be made

respecting the circumstances. If no objection appeared, the parties, accompanied by their friends, and the pastor of the society, or some other minister, repaired to a meeting appointed, by previous notice, for this purpose: and there, in the presence of the congregation, joining their hands, they declared, that, from, that day, they took each other for husband and wife: mutually engaging to treat each other with all the affection and fidelity which that relation required. They afterwards signed a Certificate of the transaction, drawn up on a paper properly stamped: which was attested by the signatures of as many of the company present, as were thought convenient. The minister then concluded the meeting, by giving suitable exhortations to the newly-married couple, and offering up solemn prayer to God, for his blessing on their union.

The marriage was also entered in the records of the society, and properly attested.*

[* Grantham's *Truth and Peace*, Postscript. Min. of Gen. Ass. and various Church Books.--Mr. Grantham has preserved the form of the certificate, used on this occasion, which we insert, as a proper elucidation of the preceding hints.

"These are to testify to all men, that we, A. B. of &c. and C. A of &c. have, the day of the date hereof, entered into the covenant state of marriage, according to a solemn contract heretofore made between ourselves, and with the consent of such as are concerned in order thereunto: and we do now, in the presence of Almighty God and the witnesses hereafter named, ratify the said contract and covenant-act of marriage this day verbally made: in both which we do, in the fear of God, mutually and solemnly, and for our parts respectively, promise, in the strength of God, to live together in the state of marriage, according to God's ordinance, from this day forward; to love each other as husband and wife, and faithfully perform all the duties to which we are bound by God's law, and the good laws of the land, in that case provided, till the Lord by death shall separate us. In testimony whereof, we have hereunto set our hands, the day of &c.

A. B C. D.

We whose names are subscribed, do testify, That the above said A. B. and C. D. the day and year abovesaid, did mutually take each other into the state of marriage, acknowledging the contract and covenant, and ratifying the same by word, and by the subscription thereof as abovesaid. In witness whereof, we do hereunto set. our hands, the day and year abovesaid."

E. F. G. H. &c. &c.

This appears to have been the established form of the Marriage Covenant. The copy of the certificate of the marriage of John Hursthouse, and Sarah Green, in 1716, now lies before us; and is precisely in the terms of this published by Grantham, in 1689.]

Marriages, thus solemnized, were valid, not only in the court of conscience, but in the courts of law: as it was several times determined, when the enemies of the baptists instituted actions to set them aside. Indeed, dissenters in general enjoyed this privilege,

till 1753, when the famous Marriage act was passed: which requires all marriages to be solemnized in an episcopal church or chapel, after the publication of banns, and in the form prescribed in the liturgy of the established church. Since that period, all dissenters, except the quakers and the Jews, who were specially exempted from the restrictions of the act, have been obliged, in the article of matrimony, to conform.

When professors found themselves at liberty, during the confusions caused by the civil wars, to read the scriptures, and act for themselves, several of the English General Baptists, as well as others, esteeming the example and precept of the great Head of the church, respecting washing the feet of the saints [John 13:4-17], to be binding on all his followers, conscientiously practised it, as a religious institution. It appears to have been warmly debated in Lincolnshire, during the protectorate. That troubler of Israel, R. Wright, stickled hard, in 1653, to make it a term of communion: but his attempts were unsuccessful. We have no evidence of its being much practised after the Revolution, except among the Kentish churches. So early as 1659, W. Jeffery, the founder of those churches, pleads for it--as "commanded and blest by Christ"--"as setting out Christ's humility"--as declaring that the ways of Christ are self-denying ways"--"as being a self-denying practice, and therefore serving to humble the creature"--and, "when performed decently, and in order, as tending to produce affection among brethren." [*Whole Faith of Man*, p. 103.] Yet these reasons did not long satisfy some of his successors. About the close of that century, the church at Bessell's Green passed this liberal resolution. "As touching washing of feet, it was agreed, that those amongst us that see it a duty should be found in the practice of it: and those who cannot see it to be their duty should not withdraw their affection, in the least, from those who do; nor those who do, from those who do not: but all maintain an equal respect for each other." [B. G. C. B. &c.]

We have not met with any clear account of the manner in which they conducted this ceremony. From several entries in their records, it seems, that it was not attended to at any stated seasons; but occasionally, at times appointed for that service by the church. And, it is probable, that, on these occasions, they imitated, as nearly as circumstances would permit, the procedure of our Saviour, when, as they thought, he instituted this ordinance.

There was another rite, which obtained much more extensive and durable footing among the English general baptists; and which they grounded on the apostolic precept, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick: and the Lord shall raise him up." [James 5:14, 15.] This anointing the sick with oil, they considered to be the peculiar privilege of the children of God, in all ages which might, therefore, when the parties were properly qualified, still be legally claimed, and with humble confidence used. It was necessary, as they thought, that the sick should be an approved member of their church; and that he should not only be convinced of the divine appointment of this ordinance, but also express his ardent desire to enjoy the benefit of it. It was requisite, too, that the administrators should possess a full persuasion of the propriety and efficacy of the operation. And, as the original direction mentions elders of the church, it was long thought improper for one minister to act alone in this ordinance. It

was not till 1701 that the Lincolnshire Association determined, that it might, in cases of urgency, be performed by a single elder. So scrupulous were the Kentish general baptists in observing the express letter of the institution, that, when the church at Biddenden, in 1678, divided into two parts, and their elders G. Hammon and J. Blackmon, became independent pastors of the distinct societies, it was agreed, at, the time of the separation, "That each elder shall fairly and willingly, as aforetime, join the other, and go to such members of each congregation as are sick, and shall send for them, to administer the ordinance of anointing, till there is some other provision made in the congregation, from which they may supply themselves."

The enemies of these christians have endeavoured to give an air of superstition and impiety to this practice, by calling it "extreme unction;" and thus identifying it with the popish sacrament so denominated: and grave historians have perpetuated the calumny.* But the design of anointing with oil, among the baptists, was to cure the sick, and restore him to health; and the mode of administration was conformable to the precept which requires only the prayer of faith: while the extreme unction of the papists is accompanied with many superstitious ceremonies and administered to persons at the point of death, as a passport to heaven, rather than as the means of recovery.

[* Thus, Dr. Wall, calls it "extreme unction of the sick, spoken of James 5." *Inf. Bap.* Part II. 272. Whiston's loose mode of expression seemed to favour the identity of the Romish and baptist practices. *Memoirs*, Vol. II. p. 473. And Dr. Mosheim, who had no other guides, roundly states it, as one of the "peculiar" rites of the English general baptists, that, "They use extreme unction." *Eccl. Hist.* Vol. IV. p. 480. No wonder that an opponent, in the heat of debate, should improve these reports, and exclaim, "Let us look into their end, and bring them to their grave; and here, like the papists, they use the extreme unction." Russen's *Fundamentals without a Foundation*, p. 60. To this rant, the judicious Joseph Stennett calmly replies, " When he calls it," (the baptists' anointing with oil) "extreme unction," and says they administer it at the last hour, like the papists, he does them wrong: for this is not done when they despair of life; but for the recovery of the sick, as his own words afterwards declare. And though I cannot say I am satisfied, that the obligation of the precept, James 5:14, 15, continues, since miracles are not common in the christian church; yet, I must acknowledge there seems to be more in that text to countenance such a practice, than Mr. Russen has produced, from the whole scriptures, in favour of the opinions he professedly defends in this treatise." *Answer to Russen*, page 205.]

Though there is such abundant evidence, that this ceremony was occasionally observed by the general baptists, through the whole period of which we are treating; yet we have not met with any well-attested accounts of particular cases, before the close of the seventeenth century. Afterwards, such cases are numerous: and the results of some of them truly surprising. Indeed, this practice appears to have much increased in their estimation, during the former part of the succeeding century. In 1757, a learned general baptist, a layman, who could not be supposed to be self-interested, thus describes it. "This holy unction is the children's peculiar privilege, which, thro' divine grace, and God's unbounded love to His people, it is appointed and designed for the relief of our bodies,

the comfort of our souls, the strengthening our faith and hope in all the gracious promises of his holy word, and stedfast walking in all the sacred ordinances of his house and worship: and also for the advancement of his own glory, the discovery of his love and faithfulness, and the manifestation of the truth of the christian religion throughout all the ages of it." [G. Killingworth's *Reply to Whiston*, pp. 9, 10.]

Several historians have mentioned the abstaining from the eating of blood as one of the characteristics of the general baptists. But, though it is true that they generally, perhaps universally, believed the practice forbidden, both by the precept given to Noah [Gen. 9:4], and the decree of the church at Jerusalem [Acts 15:29]; yet so many conscientious persons, of other persuasions, have always agreed with them in this opinion, that it cannot be reckoned as descriptive of them. It would, indeed, have been very surprising, if men so determined to follow literally the precepts of scripture, had entertained any scruple on this subject.

Various other particulars have been recorded but, as they were only partially adopted by them, and were practised by others, we omit them. It may be necessary, however, to hint, that neither the washing of feet, anointing with oil, nor abstaining from blood, are ever mentioned in their public Confessions: and, therefore, formed no part of their belief or practice, as a body.--We close this section with two remarks.

However these good, but, in general, illiterate men, might misunderstand the proper application of some parts of the oracles of truth; yet, it is evident, they were actuated by a deep sense of their authority, and an earnest wish to submit to their direction. What else but a holy determination to obey God, could have inspired them with courage to brave the insults, the ridicule, and the persecution of all parties; and to persevere, with unshaken constancy, in the profession and practice of what they esteemed the laws of their Saviour?--We have seen their enemies treating them with every possible indignity while living; insulting their bodies when dead; depriving them of their property, their liberty, and even of their lives; calumniating their characters, in the most cruel and wanton manner; and holding them up, at once, to the hatred and derision of their fellow-subjects:--and yet these christians quietly proceeded in the conscientious discharge of their duty; and left their defence to Him, whom they served, Such fortitude and, obedience do honour to their memories; and furnish an useful lesson to their successors. If these esteem themselves better instructed in some parts of divine knowledge than their ancestors were, may they evince the same zeal for the honor of their Redeemer, the same disposition to keep all his commandments, and the same child-like simplicity in receiving all his doctrines!

It is worthy of observation, too, that in all our researches, we have found nothing like imposition, as to the mode of administering any of these ordinances. Neither the writings of their leading men, nor the transactions of their associations or general assemblies, furnish even the outlines of a form, to be generally observed. Nor did they, like the presbyterians, who profess to condemn prescribed models, publish a long directory, to instruct the administrator in the due mode of discharging every part of his duty. No. They left their ministers and brethren to study that infallible directory, the word of God, and to

regulate their procedure in all affairs of a religious nature, to the best of their own judgments, in conformity to that sacred standard. Happy would it have been for the cause of truth, had all Christians acted on the same principles!

SECT. 10.--Associations--General Assemblies--Right of Appeal--the Authority of General Assemblies--their Utility.

We have thus far considered the general baptist churches as independent societies, each carrying on the cause of the Redeemer distinctly from the rest: but we should do them great injustice, did we not contemplate them as acting in concert, in the great work in which they were all engaged.

As soon as any number of general baptist churches had been gathered, in any county or district, they united to support a periodical meeting, to consult for the common welfare. Such a meeting was called an Association, and was usually held, at the principal place of the district, quarterly, half yearly, or annually, according to the convenience of the congregations supporting it. It was composed of two or more representatives from each church in the district, elected to this office by the church which sent them. The messenger or elder was most frequently chosen, and was joined to one or more respectable private brethren: who had equal right with the ministers to deliberate and vote.

The business usually transacted at these associations was--the reformation of inconsistent or immoral conduct, whether in ministers or private christians--the prevention or suppression of heresy--the reconciling of differences between members and churches--the giving of advice in difficult cases, whether respecting individuals or societies--the proposing of plans of usefulness--the recommending of cases that required pecuniary support--and, in short, the devising of the most effectual means of promoting the prosperity of religion in the world at large, but especially in their own churches.

It is not easy to ascertain the number of Associations into which the English general baptists were divided; new unions being frequently formed; and the old ones dissolved. During the period which we have been reviewing, we have discovered traces of the Buckinghamshire, the Cambridgeshire, the Dorsetshire, the Isle of Ely, the Kentish, the Lincolnshire, the London, the Northamptonshire, the Western, and the Wiltshire Associations. These all existed at the close of the seventeenth century; and appear then to have been, in a greater or less degree, flourishing. Several of them, we know, were composed of a considerable number of prosperous churches:--the Buckinghamshire Association, in 1678, was attended upwards of fifty-four messengers, took their rise during the civil wars, as we find them frequently assembling under the protectorate. . These Associations, in the different parts of the nation, maintaining only a local union, a more general co-operation became desirable. To effect this, occasional meetings were held, usually in London, as the centre of the kingdom, which they styled General Assemblies. They were composed of representatives from the various Associations, and from such churches as chose to send their deputies: which might be either ministers or private brethren. Mr. Grantham, after having detailed the proceedings of the meeting at Jerusalem [Art. xv], which they reckoned as the scriptural precedent both of their

Associations and General Assemblies, adds, "From all which, is it without doubt, that, in General Assemblies, the brotherhood are to be admitted: such, doubtless, as are judicious, and apt to lend assistance in such weighty affairs. The reason is evident: because the gifts of the Holy Ghost are common to the whole brotherhood: by virtue of which they are permitted to speak in the church [1 Cor. 14:31], and consequently in general assemblies also, where the use of all manner of gifts are needful." [*Christ. Prim.* Book II. Para. p. 142.]

It is not easy to ascertain the exact date of the first introduction of General Assemblies among these churches: but we may place it, with great probability, under the protectorate. Mr. Grantham, in 1671, speaks of them as generally established and approved [Sigh for Peace, pp. 130--132]: and, in 1678, having mentioned the assembly, recorded Acts 15, he proceeds thus: "According to this precedent, the baptized churches in this age and nation have kept an Assembly-general for many years, for the better settlement of the churches to which they are related." This Assembly has been continued to the present time; and is now annually held in Worship-street, on the Tuesday in Whitsun week. It has, indeed, been most usually held yearly; though it was occasionally adjourned for two, three, or even four years: and this, not only during the persecuting reigns of the Stuarts, but after the Revolution. [From 1689 to 1728, a period of thirty nine years, there were only twenty two general assemblies. Minutes of Gen. Assembly.]

This system of Associations and General Assemblies gave rise to a custom of Appeal from the decisions of particular churches. When any member thought himself aggrieved, by the proceedings of his church, he might appeal to two or more neighbouring churches, and require them to hear and judge the case. If the appeal was received, a meeting of deputies from each of the societies to which the appeal was made was appointed; and, both parties having been heard at length, judgment was given. But if either party remained still dissatisfied, the business might be brought before the Association to which they belonged; and have another investigation. And from the decision of the Association, there yet lay a final appeal to the General Assembly. For some time, the discontented persons appear to have been considered as having a right to claim a hearing: but this was found to protract altercations, and nourish a captious spirit. The Assembly therefore resolved, that no cases of this nature should be received by them, without the mutual consent and request of all the parties concerned. ["Resolved, that it be agreed, that if any controversy arise in any church or churches, or between particular members thereof, that the controversy shall be heard and determined by the said church or churches in which it has risen, which have full power and authority from God's word to hear and determine, by the same word, all controversies among themselves. But if the controversy be not determined to the satisfaction of both parties, the dissatisfied member may, with the consent of the church or churches to which they belong, refer it to sister churches by their representatives, or to the association. If their decision be still unsatisfactory, it may be brought to the assembly, to be heard and determined, provided the contending parties so agree; but without such mutual agreement, the assembly hath no authority over any particular churches, only to give their counsel and advice." Minutes of Gen. Assembly, 1711.]

This right of appeal appears hardly consistent with that independency of individual churches which these professors so strenuously asserted. Of this they were aware: and therefore restrained the power of Associations and General Assemblies to giving good advice, which, on account of the wisdom, experience, and piety of the persons who composed such meetings, challenged respectful consideration. They by no means allowed them to legislate for the churches, or considered their decrees as infallible. "This mutual consultation of many churches," observes Mr. Grantham, "shews not any superiority of churches one over another; but only the brotherly interest which they have in the strength of each other, and the duty which lieth upon the churches, to help one another in their difficulties." And, when treating on the question, "How far agreements made by a General Assembly do oblige the churches concerned by their representatives?" he asserts, "To ascribe infallibility to any Assembly since the apostles' days, must in no wise be allowed.--Wherefore, though we ought to consider with great respect what concluded by a general council of Christ's true ministers; yet we may lawfully doubt of what they deliver, unless they confirm it by the word of the Lord." [Ibid. p. 139.]

This respectable author, however, esteemed Associations and General Assemblies as highly important and useful. "Doubtless," says he, "the strength of the church thus united, is the most powerful means under heaven, through the virtue of Christ's promise to be with them as his church, to stop the current of heresy, and to keep the churches in unity, both in doctrine and manners." [Ibid. p. 137.] Nor did he think, that, in the formation of these Assemblies, it was necessary to attend to those differences, which in particular societies would forbid communion. "General Assemblies," he observes, "are ordained for general controversies; and, through the blessing of God, are the best expedient under the sun for composing divisions in the churches. Here the liberty of christians should be, yea, must be, maintained; though they differ right much in their opinions in matters of religion. We know well, that, not only the christians in the ages bordering on the primitive, but even the apostles of our Lord, did allow christians of very different persuasions freely to deliberate on things propounded in such assemblies. For my part, I could heartily wish, that all the congregations of christians in the world, that are baptized according to the appointment of Christ, would make one consistory, at least sometimes, to consider of the matters in difference among them. For if this be not admitted, there are no means remaining, as I conceive, to heal their divisions: and, consequently, to obtain that peace which should rule in the hearts of all God's people, because they are thereunto called in one [universal] body." [*Sigh for Peace*, p. 131.]

This good man, who, though he was constantly engaged in controversy, was yet a sincere lover of peace, carried his views of the utility of these meetings still farther; and thought that they might be made instrumental in producing universal concord among all the various religious parties. "When it shall please God," he says, "to put it into the hearts of the rulers of nations to permit a free and general Assembly of the differing professors of christianity, for the finding out of the truth, we trust that some of the baptized churches will, if permitted, readily make their appearance, with others, to help on that needful work." [*Sigh for Peace*, p. 131.]

SECT. 11.—Dissensions among the English General Baptists, at the close of the seventeenth century, respecting the opinions of Mr. Caffin.

We have seen, in various instances, the sacred regard which the English General Baptists paid to the volume of inspiration. They were fully persuaded, that it was the word of a God of faithfulness and truth; and, therefore, very rationally concluded, that they had sufficient authority to believe any doctrine which it asserted. Convinced, by daily experience, that many things in nature and providence were to them incomprehensible, they never expected to be able fully to understand all the doctrines of revelation.—Hence, when any proposition of a religious nature was offered to their consideration, their first care was, to examine whether it was taught in the scriptures: and, if they were convinced of this, they esteemed themselves bound to believe it, though it might, in some respects, exceed their comprehension. This was, for a long time, the general character of these professors : but, at length, some speculatists rose amongst them, who presumed to drag the doctrines of religion to the bar of their own reason. Before they ventured to give their assent to a truth, however plainly asserted by the inspired penmen, they examined whether they could understand and explain it: and, if it did not approve itself to their superior powers of reasoning, esteemed it a subject of doubt, if not of disbelief.

The leader of these rational sceptics was Mr. M. Caffin, pastor of the church at Horsham in Sussex: a minister eminent for his diligence and success, who had contributed much to the spread of the general baptist interest in those parts, and had suffered greatly for his attachment to it. He was a man of good natural abilities, which had been improved by a liberal education: an expert disputant, who, for half a century, had been considered as the champion of his party, and was often called to defend it against able opponents. This, probably, tempted him to depend too unguardedly on his own powers; and inclined him to suspect every thing which exceeded their grasp.

It appears, that he early began to puzzle himself with endeavouring to explain inexplicables. His first difficulty seems to have been, to reconcile the assertion, that Christ was free from sin, with the fact of his being conceived of the virgin. He could not understand how a clean thing could be produced by an unclean one. Instead of referring to the scripture, and contenting himself with the account which it gives of the fact, he adopted an hypothesis which, as he thought, removed the difficulty. He supposed, that the body of Christ was miraculously created in the womb of his mother; and, therefore, did not partake of her substance. He pursued his reasonings, till, at length, he maintained, that "the Lord Jesus Christ, as he was the Word, John 1:1, was not of the uncreated substance of the Father, nor of the created substance of his mother; but that God made him a creature only: and that this creature was made flesh, not by taking flesh of the Virgin, but that the Word was turned into flesh in the womb of the Virgin." These were the sentiments which his enemies ascribed to him: though he appears to have artfully disguised them in public; and to have spoken out only in private conversation, or correspondence.

With this turn of mind, it is no wonder that he disliked the Athanasian creed. "He readily acknowledged," when defending himself before the general Assembly, "that there were

some propositions in that creed which were above his understanding, after the most diligent and impartial examination: and, therefore, he never had, nor could as yet receive it, as the standard of his faith." [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 210.] Had Mr. Caffin objected to this horrid formula, because it dares to explain what the oracles of truth have left unexplained; and to fix the penalty of eternal misery on the disbelief of these human explications, every intelligent friend to genuine christianity would have approved his conduct. But when he declared "that he could not make it the standard of his faith, because it was above his understanding," he prepared the way for the denial of the most essential truths of the gospel.

Mr. Caffin was accustomed to converse frequently, on these subjects, with Mr. J. Wright, of Maidstone, with whom he had long been in habits of great intimacy. That minister, perceiving the destructive tendency of his principles, and probably observing, that they had already begun to produce baneful effects in the neighbouring churches, both in Kent and Sussex, thought it to be his duty to sacrifice private friendship to the public good. He therefore preferred a charge at the general Assembly, against Mr. Caffin, of heresy, in denying both the divinity and humanity of our Saviour: and demanded, that he should be expelled from the Assembly, and from all communion with the baptized churches. Mr. Caffin, who was present, made a specious defence: professing his regard to Christ, and his submission to the authority of the scriptures: and concluded by observing, "that it had been his study and delight to exalt and honour his Saviour, both as God and man, to the highest degree of thought that he never disturbed the minds of any christian about unrevealed sublimities; but was willing that every one should have the same liberty of judgment which he claimed for himself and, that he was far enough from perfection in knowledge; but, as his friends well knew, was always open to conviction, and thankful for every addition of further light." The Assembly were so well satisfied with this defence, that they not only acquitted Mr. Caffin, but censured Mr. J. Wright for want of charity. Not discouraged, however, by this repulse, Mr. Wright, in conjunction with another minister, brought the business before an Assembly, held at Aylesbury: but here he was equally unsuccessful. That meeting resolved, "to maintain amity and friendship with Mr. Caffin, though he might differ a little in some abstruse unrevealed speculations."

Mr. Wright, finding his efforts fruitless, and despairing of rousing his colleagues to a sense of the danger that threatened the churches, withdrew from the Assembly, and protested against all its proceedings. Nor does he appear to have afterwards taken any part in this debate; though he lived at least seventeen years; and the controversy continued long, after his death.--The date of his appeals to the Assembly is not preserved: but we have good evidence that it was prior to 1686. [This is evident, from the following entry in the Biddenden Church Book, dated Sept. 6th 1686. "Agreed, that we have communion with all our neighbour congregations, as occasion may offer except it be with such persons as stand by and justify Joseph Wright in his late actions, which have a grief to many."]

Mr. Caffin, encouraged probably by the failure of Mr. Wright's attempts, appears to have acted more openly in spreading his opinions. One John Weller had been excluded, by the

Buckinghamshire churches, for maintaining openly the sentiments of which Mr. Caffin was suspected. To support his friend under what would probably be styled the persecution of bigotry, Mr. Caffin wrote a letter to Weller, in which he frankly avowed that he was of his opinion on the subjects in debate: calling the tenets for which he was suffering, precious truths; in which he was full of confidence." At the general Assembly, in 1692, Mr. Caffin had expressed himself, on these topics, with great freedom; and his words were taken down, and attested by several of the bearers,

In the year following, 1693, the former charges of denying the divinity and humanity of Christ were, once more, preferred against Mr. Caffin, at the general Assembly. To support this accusation, the letter to Mr. Weller was produced, and acknowledged by Mr. Caffin, to be his writing: and the memorandum of Mr. Caffin's assertions, at the preceding Assembly, was read. Yet, such influence had the accused over the majority of this meeting, that, "by far the greater part of the assembly voted, that he was not guilty of the matters charged against him." To establish, however, their own orthodoxy, they resolved, "that the opinions ascribed to Mr. Caffin were heresies." But the proceedings of this Assembly were so much disapproved by some of its members, that a spirited "Protest" was published against them, signed by sixteen "Messengers, elders, -and brethren, representatives of several congregations in divers parts of the nation", "to clear themselves and the congregations to which they belonged of those gross errors and of the countenancing of them." The Assembly then adjourned for three years: probably with a view to afford time for the heat of these contentions to subside. [Minutes of Gen. Assembly, and *Protestation of the Seceders*.]

When the Assembly met, at Midsummer, 1696, the subject was again resumed, with unabated zeal. The protesters insisted on Mr. Catlin's being brought to a trial; and if found guilty, excluded from the communion of the churches but the majority adhered to their former decision. After much contention, the protesters withdrew themselves from all connection with the Assembly; and soon after published the following paper, entitled, "The Reasons of our Separation, from the General Assembly." "Whereas Matthew Caffin hath been oftentimes charged, at several general assemblies, held at London, with holding, that the Son of God, or the Word, was not of the uncreated nature and substance of the Father, neither of the created substance of his mother,--which we believe, and are ready to prove, to be a great heresy; and several messengers, elders, and representatives of baptized churches in England, having for many years, endeavoured that the said Mr. Caffin might be brought to a fair trial, and never yet could obtain it from the general Assembly; and also entered the Protest hereunto annexed. [The Protest of 1693, mentioned above.] And also now, at this present Assembly, held at Goswell-street, London, June 4th. 1696, we having used our utmost endeavours that there might be a fair hearing of the matter: and, notwithstanding all the endeavours that, we have used, it hath been refused and cast, out by the said Assembly, to the great grief and trouble of, our souls.

"We, therefore, having a, due regard to the honour of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the duty of the churches, and the discharge of our own consciences, do, in behalf of ourselves, and the churches which we represent, for the reasons above-mentioned, dissent

from, disown, and separate ourselves front this general Assembly, until they shall purge themselves of the said heresy."

This paper was signed by W. Smith, A. Beaven, John Perkins, John Lacey, F. Morris, Clement Hunt, Robert Goodson, J. Taylor, Thomas Fowle, Joseph Morris, Robert Hore, J. Baker, T Wainright, James Clark, Richard Cox, John Cook, and Richard Robinson, besides William Alliott, Edward Wood, Josiah Welbey. J. Balley, and W. Woodham, who signed after it had been presented to the Assembly.

The seceders resolved to hold an annual meeting in London, at the time of the general Assembly, to consist of the representatives of' the churches which approved the separation; to which they gave the name of the General Association. The first meeting was held May 12th. 1697; and was attended by the representatives of the churches in White's-alley, London; Deptford, Kent; Rainham, Essex; Wilbrun, Cambridge; Bridgeshire; Aylesbury, Cuddington and Berkstead, Bucks. In the following year, it was joined by the church under Dr. Russell, London, and the congregations at Brainford, Essex, and Ashford, Kent. [Minutes of General Association.]

The General Assembly declared the separation of these seceders disorderly; and sent them, in 1697, an admonition to return. At the same time they resolved, "that all debates, public or private, respecting the Trinity, should be managed in scripture words and terms, and no other." A weak and ineffectual attempt to quash the controversy!--For, at that Assembly, Mr. J. Amory presented a letter from the Western Association, calling earnestly on the Assembly to bring Mr. Caffin to an immediate examination. And, in 1698, Mr. Garrett urged the same request, with much importunity, in the name of' the churches in Northamptonshire. But though Mr. Hooke, in behalf of the Lincolnshire Association, zealously seconded Mr. Garrett's proposal; yet the Assembly after declaring the tenets ascribed to Mr. Caffin to be heretical, adjourned for two years! with an intimation, that the investigation demanded should be granted at the next meeting.

During the interim, the general Association met, in 1699; and addressed a long letter to the churches in the various parts of the kingdom, which they esteemed sound in the faith: stating, the reasons and design of their separation from the general Assembly; the nature and proofs of Mr. Caffin's heresy; and the urgent necessity of opposing it, in order--to preserve the general baptist cause from reproach--to maintain the honour of the Saviour--and to prevent the spread of error. They concluded the address in these words: "Therefore, beloved brethren, hearken to the call of God; 'Come out from among them, and be you separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing,, and I will receive you.' For it is impossible to have communion with men who are thus guilty of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, but you must needs be defiled. In vain is it for you to separate from such as err about the subjects and manner of baptism if at the same time you maintain communion with heretics and idolaters; as those must needs be who deny the Deity of the Son of God, and the immensity and omnipresence of the Divine Essence.* And how you can think to answer it to the Lord of life and glory, when you are summoned before his tribunal, thus to slight his friends and encourage those enemies of God and Christ, we cannot imagine. We beseech you, therefore, in the bowels of Christ,

to consider these things, before it be too late. Make haste, and delay not, we beseech you, to shew your love to Christ, by owning and encouraging us, in our vindication of the honour and majesty of the Redeemer."

[* This refers to another opinion of Mr. Caffin, who, as his enemies asserted, maintained "that God, in respect of his essence, is neither infinite nor omniscient; but is a limited Being, in a form or shape, much like a man." When a creature undertakes to describe the CREATOR, it may be expected that he will fall into gross absurdities. What Mr. C.'s real sentiments were, it is not easy to say: as none of his own works have fallen under our inspection; and it is not always safe to trust the reports of adversaries. But it seems he explained himself, on these sublime subjects, at the General Assembly in 1697, so unsatisfactorily, that honest John Amory exclaimed, in the open meeting, to Mr. C.'s face, "That God, whom my brother Caffin worships, is none of my God; neither will I worship him: that Christ that he worships is none of my Christ; neither will I worship him." Min. Gen. Ass. 1699.]

Several churches joined with the seceders this year: but many, unwilling to make a breach till every effort had been made to procure redress, waited the issue of the promised trial. In 1700, the general Assembly met at Fair-street, Horslydown; when Mr. Caffin was present, and the subject was resumed. But, in order to avoid the heat and confusion of a public investigation, a committee of eight persons were appointed; four of whom were selected from Mr. Caffin's friends, and four from his accusers. These were directed to confer with Mr. Caffin, and to prepare some statement of the subjects in debate, which might, if possible, satisfy all parties; and serve as a basis for future union. After due deliberation, they brought forward a proposition; which, being considered by the Assembly, was approved and signed by the majority of the members present. It was afterwards agreed to offer this "Expedient," as it was justly called, as a ground of re-union, to the general Association, which was then sitting at White's-alley: and Mr. J. Amory was sent to propose it to their acceptance.

But that meeting objected to the Assembly's expedient, as obscure and ambiguous; and tendered a proposition, on the same sublime subjects, of their own composing. This Mr. Amory declined presenting: and proposed, that both papers should be laid aside; and four persons be appointed by each party to endeavour to effect an agreement. The Association accepted this proposal; and the deputies met: but, neither being disposed to give way, nothing was done. On the contrary, this abortive attempt at reconciliation seems to have widened the breach: for, at the close of the conference, the general Association agreed, "That we stand to what we did at the general Assembly, in the year 1696: and that we cannot have communion with any persons, at the Lord's table, nor admit any to preach amongst us, that are in communion with, that Assembly until that Assembly shall purge themselves from the heresies for which we made, our separation."

[* Min. of Gen. Assem. and Gen. Ass. 1700.---It may perhaps amuse the curious reader, to see the propositions framed on this occasion.--The Assembly's expedient ran thus: "It is agreed, That Christ, as he is the Word, is from the beginning: but in time that Word took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham; and as

such is Immanuel, God with us, or God manifest in the flesh: and, as he is the Word, is one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. And, as he was God manifest in the flesh; so he is the Jesus, that tasted death for every man. And further: whereas there have been, and yet are, debates about the Most High God, we conceive he is one infinite, unchangeable, and eternal Spirit, incomprehensible Godhead, and doth subsist in the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost."]

The opposition of the seceders was strengthened by a resolution passed at this General Assembly; importing, "That whatsoever conceptions any of us may have, concerning the several expressions contained in the Expedient, contrary to the common acceptation thereof; yet if any one, by preaching, writing, discoursing, or, otherwise, shall publish or declare such his conceptions thereof, to the disturbance of the peace of the church or churches of Christ that are of our communion, such person is declared to be a disturber, and to be accountable for this conduct to the Assembly." [Minutes of General Assembly.] The members of the Association contended, that this resolution granted a liberty to every one to sign the expedient, in his own sense; provided he kept it to himself: a permission which they thought to be inconsistent with christian sincerity.

The Seceders expressed themselves in these terms: "The Association meeting in White's-alley, London, Do believe, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in respect of his divine nature, is of the same essence, nature, and substance with God the Father; and, as such, equal with him from everlasting; and not God only by deputation: and that this eternal Son of God, subsisting in the same divine essence with God, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, did, in the fullness of time, take on him the seed of Abraham; by being made of the seed and substance of his mother, according to the flesh: and that he was of the same flesh and blood as our bodies are, sin only excepted: and that he was not made man by having his divine nature or substance changed into flesh and blood in the Virgin's womb." [Min. of Gen. Assem. and Gen. Assoc.]

At the next meeting of the General Assembly, in 1702, the Northamptonshire churches renewed their complaints: asserting that Mr. Caffin had not been brought to a fair trial. The majority, however, after deliberating on the subject, voted, "That the declaration Mr. Caffin has made, and his signing the aforesaid expedient, are sufficient and satisfactory." [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 284.] This decision appears to have caused both the Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire churches to forsake the Assembly and join the Association; to which they sent representatives the following year. But though the Assembly adhered so tenaciously to Mr. Caffin, yet they took every opportunity of condemning the opinions ascribed to him: which they again, this year, declared to be errors, and formally abjured. [Minutes of General Assembly, 1702.]

Previous to the meeting of these conventions, in 1704, a book was published, entitled, "A Vindication of the Ancient General Assembly," in which some overtures of peace and unity were proposed. This book was laid before the General Association, assembled at White's-alley, June 8, 1704: and that meeting thought proper to send messengers to the general Assembly, which was then sitting at Goodman's-fields, to inquire how far they would "make good" the overtures contained in the Vindication. On the same day, the

Assembly returned an answer, that "though, as a body they had not been any way concerned in the publication of the book; yet, on seriously reading the overtures alluded to, they were ready and willing to embrace and act upon them; and that they did expect the same disposition from the Association." In consequence of this correspondence, Jos. Hooke, Joseph Jenkins, S. Keeling, and Samuel Wright, were appointed by the Association; and John Amory, John Maulden, David Brown, and Benjamin Miller, by the Assembly; to confer together, and consider of proper methods for restoring these jarring bodies to their former harmony. These eight brethren, after mature consideration, proposed a number of articles of faith and conditions of union: which, being approved by both parties, a reconciliation was effected. The next day, the members of the Assembly and Association met as one body: and for some time the general Association was suspended. The propositions on which these representatives united were immediately published, for the information of their constituents, under the title of "The Unity of the Churches:" in which the articles of faith, on the disputed points, are thus expressed. "First, respecting Almighty God.--We do believe, and are very confident, that there is one, and but one living and true God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, and changeth not; without body, parts, or imperfections: essentially present in all places; of Infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the Maker of all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible: and, that in this divine and infinite Being, or Unity of the Godhead, there are Three Persons, the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, of one substance, power, and eternity." "Secondly, respecting the Lord Jesus, Christ--We do believe, that there is but one Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person in the Trinity, and the only begotten Son of God; and that he did, in the fulness of time, take to himself our nature, in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, of whom, in respect of the flesh, he was made; and so is true God, and true Man, our Immanuel." [*Unity of the Churches.*]

Several prudential resolutions were added, designed to prevent reflections and offences, and to restore mutual good-will. The paper was signed by thirty-nine members of the Assembly and Association, exclusive of the eight who composed it. But, it seems, that dissatisfaction soon began to shew itself: for, in the next Assembly, May 1705, new debates arising, another committee was appointed, "to go immediately and agree upon an expedient to confirm the union already begun." This committee recommended, and the assembly, after mature deliberation, approved the following extraordinary "expedient."

"This Assembly do agree, that the paper, intituled 'The Unity of the Churches,' upon assent to which the general Assembly and general Association were united in the year 1704, doth contain both articles of faith and articles of union; and that no person shall be admitted a member of the general Assembly, that refuses to assent to and subscribe the whole in the paper: and, that the person signing, or to sign, shall not be permitted to ask any question, neither shall any question be asked, upon pain of being excluded, or refused a member of the Assembly." [From the Paper printed in 1705.] The extreme caution and reserve displayed in this document, afford sufficient proof of the irritation and discord that agitated the minds of all parties.

It is worthy of remark, that through the whole of these unhappy dissensions, all parties agreed in considering the denial of the divinity or humanity of Christ, as a dangerous

heresy. This the general Assembly formally declared, at almost every meeting held during the altercation, and the articles on which they, at last, re-united, sufficiently prove their sentiments, on these important topics.* The questions at issue were, whether Mr. Caffin was guilty of holding the errors imputed to him; and whether it was lawful to hold communion with such as explained themselves, on these subjects, in the manner in which he and his friends did. This is fully evident from the account we have already given: and is confirmed by the candid Dr. Wall [who wrote in defense of infant baptism]; who was a witness of the transactions which we have just detailed; and whose testimony will not be suspected of undue partiality in favour of the baptists. Speaking of the "Reasons for Separation," published by the general Association, in which they say, "that it is to the reproach of Jesus Christ, and the pollution of the churches, to hold communion with the general Assembly, &c." the Doctor observes, "But all this is not, as far as I can learn, that they charge the general Assembly with Socinian tenets; but only with refusing to turn out some that are accused of holding them: which accusations they think to be fully proved; but the others, it seems, say they are not." **

[* If any additional evidence was required of the orthodoxy of the majority of the general Assembly, it might be proper to notice, that, during these debates, they repeatedly recognized the confession of 1660, as their creed; and that, in 1691, they agreed that "this Confession should be reprinted with Brother Grantham's explication of the Third Article." His explication was, most probably, the "Testimony of Antiquity," subjoined to that Article in his *Christ. Prim.* which as the reader has already seen (*supra*, p. 369) asserts the divinity and humanity of Christ in strong terms.--*Min. Gen. Assem.* 1691, 1697, 1704.]

[** *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Vol. II. p. 276.--As several historians, not being in possession of the original documents, have given a very imperfect account of these unhappy disputes, it was thought, that, in justice to all the parties, a more particular detail of the proceedings ought to be preserved. This detail we have attempted to give; and have drawn our information from the most authentic records. But, it is hoped, that the reader will not suppose that we intend to panegyrisé the conduct either of the general Assembly or the seceders. For, though the steady attachment to principle, and warm zeal for what they esteemed the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, which distinguished the latter, merit our high approbation; yet, it is to be lamented that these commendable dispositions were not tempered with a greater spirit of meekness. If, instead of public citations, and excommunications, they had endeavoured to draw Mr. Caffin with the cords of love; and laboured to nourish in their people a proper submission to the authority of scripture, and a deep sense of the necessity of a personal interest in the Saviour of sinners, it is very probable, that the good old man, for such he evidently was, would either have laid aside his speculations, or have confined them to his own breast. But the public attack of his opponents rendered him more tenacious in maintaining his opinions, attracted the attention of others to them, and gave them an importance and diffusion which otherwise they might never have obtained.]

[NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF WAY OF LIFE LITERATURE, THE PUBLISHER OF THE ELECTRONIC EDITION OF THIS HISTORY: Though we agree with Adam

Taylor that every doctrinal contention must be bathed in the love of Christ, we do not agree that the seceders in this case were wrong, assuming we have a reasonably accurate record of this matter. It appears to us that Taylor would have used human reasoning in an attempt to solve the problem; whereas the seceders were following the Lord's express command of Titus 3:10,11.]

This reconciliation, as might have been foreseen from the temper in which it was made, was of short duration. Indeed, the members of the Association appear to have anticipated a speedy rupture; and therefore agreed, when they consented to the union, "That upon the first breach of the articles now made by any of the members of the Assembly when united; and, upon regular application to the said Assembly no redress can be obtained; that then this Assembly will immediately re-assume the state in which we now stand:" and "that the messengers, elders, and representatives of the same churches which constitute the present general Association shall be esteemed the general Association in time to come." Accordingly, in a very few years, this Association was resumed; and parties again ran high. In 1709, an attempt was made to accommodate the differences; but the Association adhering strictly to the principles contained in the "Unity of the Churches," it proved abortive. The struggle continued, till those ministers, who had been brought up under Grantham, Stanley, and their associates, were called to their reward. When these had quitted the scene, that spurious liberality and laxity of principle, which too evidently leavened the general Assembly, at the close of the seventeenth century, gained the ascendancy. And, though many speculatists afterwards carried their reasonings to lengths from which Mr. Caffin and his contemporaries would have shrunk with horror; yet few ministers or congregations were sufficiently attached to their ancient sentiments, to make any vigorous opposition.

The natural consequences followed. The attention of the people being drawn to "doubtful disputations," rather than to the doctrines of the cross, vital religion declined in individuals, and discipline relaxed in societies. The faith, the order and the prosperity of the majority of the churches of which we have been treating, were, by degrees, undermined; and not a few of them have successively become extinct. But as the painful task of tracing the steps, and recording the particulars of this affecting declension does not fall within our plan; we therefore, willingly dismiss the subject, to contemplate a more cheering prospect.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO THE END OF VOLUME I.

Page 86 --Since the foregoing account was sent to the press, we have met with a pamphlet, printed in 1644, which furnishes some pleasing information respecting Mr. Smyth's death. It is intitled., "Mr. Cotton's Letter lately printed, examined and answered, by Roger Williams, of Providence, in New England."--Mr. Williams had asserted that "he did not remember an hour wherein the countenance of the Lord was darkened to him." To this Mr. Cotton, whose words are quoted by Mr. Williams, replied, "Be not deceived. It is no new thing with Satan to transform himself into an angel of light; and to cheat the soul with false peace, and with flashes of counterfeit consolation. Sad and woeful is the memory of Mr. Smyth's strong consolations on his death-bed, which is set as a seal to his

gross and damnable Arminianism and enthusiasm, delivered in the Confession of his Faith, prefixed to the story of his life and death. The countenance of God is upon his people when they fear him, not when they presume of their own strength; and his consolations are not found in the way of prefidence and error, but in the ways of humility and truth." p. 14. This short extract, when stript of Mr. Cotton's party comment, ascertains that Mr. Smyth retained his distinguishing sentiments to the last--and that he enjoyed strong consolations on his death-bed:" two facts which, we presume, the attentive readers of this history will not esteem either uninteresting or unimportant.

Mr. Williams, though differing from Mr. Smyth in many doctrinal opinions, bears an honourable testimony to his character, "To that which pertaineth to Mr. Smyth," he replies, "although I knew him not, and have heard of many points in which my conscience tells me, it pleased the Lord to leave him to himself; yet I have also heard by some, whose testimony Mr. Cotton will not easily refute, that he was a man fearing God. And I am sure that Mr. Cotton hath made some use of those principles and arguments on which Mr. Smyth and others went, concerning the constitution of the christian church." And, in the margin, the author notes, "Mr. Smith godly, and a light to Mr. Cotton and others, though left to himself in some things," p. 15. In another place he observes, that, "Satan himself, the accuser of the saints, cannot but confess, that multitudes of God's witnesses, reproached with the names of Brownists and anabaptists, have kept themselves from the error of the wicked, and grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, endeavouring to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to finish holiness in the fear of God." p. 40. This testimony of an opponent to the character of Mr. Smyth and his followers ought to be recorded; and the cruel insinuations of Mr. Cotton will create no surprise, when his conduct is considered. He, who for some little difference in matters of discipline, could countenance and promote the banishment of Mr. Williams, although a Calvinist, into the deserts of America, then peopled only with inhospitable savages, where he was destitute of every necessary and comfort, would feel no compunction in consigning an Arminian anabaptist to endless misery.

Page 170.--Since this sheet was printed off, Mr. Denne's account of his disputation with Dr. Gunning: has fallen into our bands. The debate was held on the 19th. and 26th of November, 1658; at the request of a lady, who, having professed repentance from dead works and faith towards God, wished to obtain information respecting baptism. On the first day, Mr. Gunning was opponent, and Mr. Denne respondent: the former endeavouring to prove infant baptism to be lawful, and the latter objecting to his arguments. On the second day, Mr. Denne, as opponent, attempted to shew the unlawfulness of infant baptism; and Mr. Gunning, as respondent, combated his reasonings. The result was "according to the affection of the auditors," "Some spake evil, and some well; some cried victory on the one side, and some on the other " The lady, however, for whose satisfaction the conference was held, was baptized, by immersion, on the first day of the succeeding December; though the weather was very cold.--H. Denne's Contention for Truth, passim.

Page 316.--Two pieces by Mr. T. Grantham have recently been handed to us, which we have not seen noticed in any account of the author. The first is a small quarto, of thirty

pages; published in 1675, under this title: "Mr. Horne answered; or, Paedo-rantism not from Zion: wherein is shewed, his mistake about the reason of his writing; and the insufficiency of his evidence, all edged to prove Infant Baptism descended from Zion, briefly discovered: together with twelve arguments by way of preface, plainly shewing, that it is as reasonable to baptize persons asleep or dead as to baptize infants."

The other is a quarto of fifty pages, which Mr. Grantham published in 1691, only a few months before his death. It is called, "A Dialogue between the Baptist and the Presbyterian: wherein the Presbyterians are punished by their own pens, for their cruel and soul-devouring doctrines, making God the ordainer of all the sins of men and devils; and reprobating the greatest part of mankind, without my help of salvation. Whereunto is annexed a Treatise of Election, intituled, The Order of Causes: formerly published by an eminent servant of Christ, and now republished, with some explication concerning Freewill."--When Mr. Grantham published this pamphlet, he meditated a large collection of the sentiments of the christian writers, from the Apostles to the time of Augustine, to shew that, for more than four hundred years, the dreadful doctrine, opposed by him, was a stranger to the church of Christ. But this, and all his other plans, for promoting, what he esteemed the cause of truth, were interrupted by his death.--Mr. Henry Haggar, whose piece on the "Order of Causes," Mr. Grantham reprinted, on this occasion, was a minister of some eminence among the particular baptists; but, being afterwards induced to review his sentiments, he adopted the principles of the general baptists.

Page 480.--In the year 1793, the late Mr. Dan Taylor was requested, by the Lincolnshire Association, to write his thoughts "on the decay of christianity among the baptized churches." He complied; and addressed several long letters, on the subject, to the venerable Mr. Boyce. We presume that our readers will not esteem the following extract from this correspondence uninteresting: as it accounts, in a manner highly satisfactory and instructive, for the awful declension of the general baptist cause, recorded in the close of this volume.

"In the last century (the seventeenth) the general baptists almost universally maintained, that the death of Christ for the sins of men, was the only foundation of a sinner's hope. And what was the state of the general baptist cause then? Their churches were numerous, and many of them large. The zeal and piety of the ministers and people were celebrated; and the pleasure of the Lord prospered in their hands. Towards the latter end of century, the sentiments of Arius and Socinus were countenanced by some of their leaders. Others were alarmed at this. Their zeal for the doctrines of the gospel was raised; they preached and wrote with vigour and earnestness, and insisted that Christ atoned for the sins of man, and that none can be saved, but through that atonement. These were calumniated and aspersed, as defective in charity. Too many of them yielded so far as to trim and temporize, and to treat these fundamental doctrines of the gospel as if they were matters of indifference. Consequently, they were but seldom preached; and when they were mentioned, even by those who still maintained them, it was rather in a way of controversy, as their opinions; not as the only foundation on which the everlasting all of man depends. The people too much lost sight of these all-important doctrines, and their relish for them gradually dwindled. Carnality and conformity to the world prevailed in

the then existing members of churches. The gospel, the great mean of conversion, being nearly laid aside, others could not possibly be converted by their ministry. And thus one church after another came to nothing; and a great number of their meeting-houses were lost, or converted to other uses, in almost every part of the nation, In a word, they degraded Jesus Christ, and he degraded them. Nor is it possible they should ever rise to any degree of eminence in religion, till there be an entire change in the doctrines of the preachers. The reason is this. The gospel alone is the power of God to the salvation of man. Rom 1:16. There is no gospel of Christ which does not include the doctrine, that Christ died for our sins, as its fundamental doctrine. 1 Cor. 5:2,3. Till this doctrine be preached, there is no gospel preached, which is the power of God to salvation, Consequently, the work of conversion never did, nor ever will, nor ever can, go forward, without the preaching of it. So the general baptist churches, as well as other churches where the doctrine is not preached, whatever other expedient they make use of, will assuredly, must of necessity, continue in their present degraded state, or grow worse and worse, till they return to this doctrine. But, when they do return to it and insist upon it, in a plain, practical and experimental manner, God will return to them. Their religion will revive, sinners will be converted, saints will be edified and purified, and God our Saviour will be glorified."

End to Volume I.

THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS.

VOLUME II.

THE NEW CONNECTION.

BOOK 1

THE HISTORY, PREVIOUS TO THE FORMATION OF THE NEW CONNECTION, OF THOSE CHURCHES WHICH ORIGINALLY COMPOSED IT.

INTRODUCTION

The New Connection of General Baptists was formed in 1770: and, at its commencement, consisted of several churches in the Midland and Northern counties, which, during the preceding thirty years, had risen from small beginnings to respectability; and a few of the societies of which we have treated, in the former part of this work. It will be necessary, therefore, before we proceed to the History of the New Connection, to lay before our

readers the most interesting particulars of the rise of the former congregations, and their progress, previous to the formation of that union; and to continue our account of the latter churches, from the close of the seventeenth century to the same period.

CHAP. 1

The Rise of the General Baptist Interest in the Midland Counties; and Its Progress to the Formation of the New Connection.

SECT. 1.--David Taylor preaches in Leicestershire--Joseph Donisthorpe at Normanton--they unite--gain Proselytes--are persecute--and triumph over their enemies.

About the middle of the last century, the doctrines of the gospel appear to have been almost banished from the pulpits of the establishment. The late Mr. John Newton, though a clergyman of the church of England, says, "I am not sure, that, in the year 1740, there was a single parochial minister, who was publicly known as a gospel preacher, in the whole kingdom." [Letters and Conversational Remarks, pp. 75,76.] In most places, the clergymen were persons of a dissolute life, who freely engaged in all the sports and vices of the age. This appears to have been peculiarly the case in the country parishes of the midland counties: and, as there were but few dissenters, and those chiefly in the large towns, the form of religion, as well as the power, was, in many of the villages, almost unknown. The inhabitants were involved in the most deplorable ignorance;--"darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people."

In this gloomy state, it pleased God to send forth his zealous servants, Messrs. Wesley and Whitfield, to rouse our countrymen to an attention to the most important of all concerns, the salvation of their immortal souls. These useful men encountered violent opposition; but were blest with astonishing success: and were soon joined by many respectable characters. Amongst others, the pious Lady Huntingdon entered warmly into their views; and exerted all the influence which her rank and fortune gave her, to promote their success. David Taylor, one of her servants, residing with her at Donington Park, in Leicestershire, having himself tasted that the Lord was gracious, was occasionally employed, under the sanction of her ladyship, in preaching in the neighbourhood. In these benevolent excursions, he visited, in 1741, Glendfield and Ratby, two villages near Leicester. Curiosity led many to hear the strange preacher, and his new doctrines: and, among the rest, Mr. Samuel Deacon of Ratby, afterwards for many years pastor of the general Baptist church at Barton. Being informed, when at work in the field, that a person had been preaching in the street, at Glenfield, and was going to preach again at Ratby, he immediately laid down his scythe, and went to hear him. The sermon made a lasting impression on his mind, and induced him to search the scriptures. The dissoluteness and ignorance of the clergyman now struck him in a new light: and he began to reflect on his own danger, as part of the flock of so careless a shepherd. After much reading, reasoning, and perplexity, he was enabled to reply on Christ alone for salvation: and immediately found peace and joy in believing. [Gen. Bap. Repository, Vol. VII. pp. 50-52.]

About this time, the Countess of Huntingdon, judging that David Taylor would be more useful as a preacher, if set a liberty from other engagements, dismissed him from her service. His visits to Ratby and Glenfield then became more frequent: and several were awakened to a sense of divine things. In the following year, he was accompanied by Stephen Dixon, a fellow-labourer; and their united exertions were blest with increasing success. Several of their followers soon attempted to teach, as well as they were able, the way of salvation to others. Two schoolmasters from Markfield, John Taylor and C. Clapham, were frequently employed in this good work at Ratby: to which village one of them removed, and formed a society on the plan of the Methodists. [Gen. Bap. Magazine, Vol. I. pp. 181, 182.]

At the same time that these transactions took place at Ratby, Joseph Donisthorpe, a respectable blacksmith at Normanton, a place some miles distant, was brought to feel a concern for the salvation of his soul. He had read the scriptures, and saw that the law of God required perfect and continued obedience; which, he was conscious, he had not rendered to it. His mind was, therefore, filled with most gloomy apprehensions respecting the account which he knew he must give. Anxious to escape from the wrath to come, he applied to a neighbouring clergyman, for advice: but that poor man, totally unacquainted with the gospel plan of salvation, could only encourage Mr. Donisthorpe to depend on the honesty of his dealings in his transactions with men, and the goodness of his moral character: adding, "Take my advice; make yourself easy; continue to attend your church; and, if all be not right at last, I will bear the blame." This assurance did not satisfy the enquirer: his uneasiness continued to despair. At length, as he was returning, one evening, from a neighbouring town, his mind deeply affected with his lost condition, and wondering how Providence could suffer such a wretch to live, he suddenly recollected the assertion of the apostle. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." His astonished mind was at once filled with the grandeur and importance of the truths which then first presented themselves to his contemplation. Redemption for a lost world, thro' the blood of Christ, filled his whole soul with the highest admiration, and the warmest gratitude; and changed his fears into joy. Supposing that he was the only person on earth to whom this grand scheme was known, he instantly determined, from motives of the purest benevolence, to communicate the good news to his fellow-sinners. He assured himself, that the intelligence would be received with rapture, by all mankind; but especially by the clergymen; who, though it was their business to teach men the way to heaven, were, he was persuaded, totally ignorant of it themselves. He went home, and immediately began to execute his philanthropic design, by imparting to his wife the grand discovery which he had made; when, to his philanthropic design, by imparting to his wife the grand discovery which he had made: when, to his great disappointment, instead of hearing it with grateful joy, she burst into tears, fearing that his intellects were deranged. The regularity of his general conduct, however, soon undeceived her: she listened with more attention; and appears to have been his first concert.

Full of the heart-felt subject, he discoursed on "justification by faith" to all who visited his house, to the customers whom business brought to his shop, and almost to every one

whom he met in the street. Some heard with attention; others reviled and persecuted him: yet the Normanton blacksmith, and his new doctrine, soon became the chief subject of conversation in the neighbourhood. Numbers flocked to his house, in the evening, after the toils of the day were finished, to examine these strange discoveries. Not a few disputed, rather than embraced the doctrine: and this obliged Mr. Donisthorpe to study the subject, and to furnish himself with arguments in its defence, both from reason and scripture. One evening, sitting on his own kitchen-table, which raised him above his neighbours, whom he had accommodated with all his chairs, he began to describe the lost state of man by nature--his utter inability to deliver himself from this dreadful situation--and the certainty and sufficiency of salvation by Christ. Full of his subject, and animated with a strong desire to make others as happy as himself, he undesignedly engrossed the whole conversation; and held on, with a fluency and earnestness that prevented interruption, for nearly two hours. At the close of this harangue, he was startled at the idea that he had been preaching. This thought had never before occurred to him: for, though he was desirous to teach his fellow-creatures the love of God to sinners; yet he designed to do it only by occasional conversation; and never entertained the most distant wish to become a public minister. His benevolence produced his first sermon: and, from the attention with which it was heard, he was encouraged to proceed. [Gen. Bap. Repository, Vol. I. pp. 241-245.]

Normanton and Ratby being only a few miles distant, David Taylor and Joseph Donisthorpe were soon informed of each other's proceedings: and mutually sought an acquaintance. This was readily obtained: and, uniting their efforts, they called carried on the good work with greater activity. In 1743, a poor man of Osbaston, near Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, invited these preachers to his house, where many attended their labours. Attracted by the novelty, John Whyatt, a carpenter, of Barton Fabis, in the same county, went to Osbaston; and was much affected under the first discourse. At the next opportunity he persuaded his neighbour, Mr. John Aldridge, a respectable farmer, to accompany him. He also was convinced of the importance of religion; and joined with his friend, in soliciting the ministers to visit Barton. As they were zealous to spread the glad tidings of the gospel, they cheerfully accepted the invitation--John Taylor went, and preached the first sermon in Mr. Whyatt's house.

For a few weeks, Mr. Taylor repeated his visits without interruption; and one evening took an opportunity of reading to his auditors an account of the persecutions endured by the eminent John Cennick. His object, doubtless, was to give them exalted ideas of the power of divine grace, which inspired that minister with such zeal for the glory of God, and such love to immortal souls, as enabled him to support his sufferings: but it had a very different effect. The feelings of his hearers were unhappily more in unison with the persecuting rabble, than the persecuted saint: and they determined not to be outdone in wickedness.

The next time, therefore, that John Taylor visited Barton, a number of persons from Nailstone, a village a mile distant, assembled; and endeavored to disturb the worship. Some tied bells round their bodies, and danced about the place: others sung and swore: and all united in the most violent threats against the preacher and his abettors. Mr. Taylor,

after repeated attempts, in which he received gross insult and abuse, finding it impossible to proceed with the service, was obliged to consult his own safety, and secretly withdrew. Having thus prevented the preaching, the mob retired. But a farmer, not pleased with the escape of the minister, caused it to be proclaimed, with sound of horn, through the neighbouring villages, that whoever would attend, and assist in taking the Methodist parson, the next time he came, wheresoever he should be found, should be rewarded with a barrel of ale; and indemnified, should the house be pulled down where he was.

Finding things assume so threatening an aspect, Mr. J. Aldridge applied to Sir Wolston Dixie, a magistrate of Bosworth, for advice and protection; who informed him, that it would be lawful to resist such a mob; and even to fire upon them, if they proceeded to attack their dwelling-houses; but recommended more lenient measures, and promised to discountenance all future disturbers of their worship. Thus encouraged, Mr. Aldridge resolved to take the preacher under his own protection; as his rank and property gave him more influence than Mr. Whyatt possessed: and, when Mr. Taylor arrived, on the following Saturday, he conducted them to his own house.

Towards night, a numerous mob assembled, headed by the constable of Nailstone, and some of the principal farmers. They marched to Mr. Whyatt's house to seize the preacher; but not finding him, they proceeded to search every house in the village, till they arrived at Mr. Aldridge's. Here a few people had assembled to meet the minister; and were preparing to commence social worship; when they observed several hundreds of people rush tumultuously into the yard. The outward door was instantly locked and almost as soon broken open. Mr. Aldridge's brother, seizing his gun, hastened to the passage, and threatened to shoot those who advanced: but, while he hesitated, the mob rushed violently upon him: and, wrenching the gun out of his hand, discharged it into the air. The inner door being fastened, they attempted to force it upon, by thrusting their fingers between the door and door-posts. One of Mr. Aldridge's sisters, in order to induce the rabble to desist, thoughtlessly took a cleaver; and, drawing it down the side of the door, wounded the fingers that were endeavouring to force it open. This imprudent action roused the fury of the assailants to the utmost pitch. they burst the door in an instant: and, seizing Mr. Aldridge's father, an infirm old man, they dragged him into the yard, and insulted and bruised him in a cruel manner. His wife, though she had shut herself in a parlour, was treated with the same barbarity. The preacher, the chief object of their rage, had secured himself in a separate apartment: but his retreat was quickly discovered by his enraged pursuers. they haled him out, amidst shouts of triumph, and the most horrid oaths and imprecations. Having secured several of the people, they conducted them and the minister, first to Nailstone, where they exhibited them, as trophies of victory, from house to house. [During this wanton exhibition, from house to house, Mr. Taylor frequently repeated the following lines: "For me my Saviour thus was led, For me a gazing-stock was made: All praise be to his holy name, Who Counts me worthy of his shame."] From thence they returned to Osbaston, in hopes of receiving some reward for their exploits from a gentleman of that place; but he properly refused to countenance such disgraceful conduct.

The evening being now far advanced, they returned to Nailstone, treating their prisoners, on the way, in the most savage manner. They threw Mr. Aldridge into a fish-pond: and two of the mob, being accidentally pushed in with him, they endeavoured to force him beyond his depth: threatening to drown him if he would not recant. He bore their insults with christian meekness, till he perceived his life to be really in danger; when, being a strong young man, he easily plunged his persecutors in the water, and made his escape. Joseph Donisthorpe, of Normanton, who was one of the prisoners, was seized by the hair, dragged to a gage, his neck violently bent across it, and threatened with immediate death. Others had their clothes torn to pieces, were pelted with mud, and led through the most miry places that could be found. They arrived, late, at Nailstone: when they set at liberty all the prisoners, except J. Taylor, the minister, and J. Whyatt. The former, they confined in a chamber, at an inn; and permitted the latter to sit by the kitchen fire. After a time, they would have dismissed Mr. Whyatt; but he refused to leave his minister; and, through the night, experienced every indignity which the malice of his enraged persecutors could devise: all which he supported like a disciple of the lowly Jesus. In the morning, he visited his family: but, regardless of the fatigues of the night, returned to Nailstone church, in time for the forenoon service. Here he met Mr. Taylor: who, though a prisoner, would not omit what he thought his duty; but attended public worship, at the same place, under a guard. For these good men had not yet formed any system of their own, or entertained any design of deserting the established church.

The next morning, the constable, accompanied by the most active rioters, carried Mr. Taylor before Sir Wolson Dixie; and laid heavy charges against him and his followers, exhibiting the wounded fingers as proofs of their accusations. Sir William naturally inquired into the cause of these wounds; and the explanation afforded him great amusement. Yet he treated the preacher and his friends with contempt and harshness: and, notwithstanding his former promises, he shewed a disposition to excuse every measure that tended to suppress the Methodists, as he tauntingly styled them. But, not choosing to commit himself by any decision, he bound the parties over to the next quarter sessions. On leaving the magistrate's, the mob, encouraged by the countenance which they had received, pursued the objects of their hatred for several miles across the fields; and, overtaking J. Whyatt, plunged him into a ditch, and otherwise abused him. At Osbaston, a large bonfire was made, as a token of rejoicing for the defeat of the Methodists, whom they threatened with utter destruction. [Some ideas of the ignorance and impiety of these wretched men, may be formed from the fact, that, many of them, while dancing round the bonfire, exclaimed, with the most horrid imprecations, "We will burn the Holy Ghost with the Methodists."--Gen. Bap. Mag. Vol. I. p. 187.]

It now became unsafe for these persecuted people to meet publicly; but they continued to assemble more privately, and to encourage each other in their attachment to the truth. They continued to attend public worship at the established church: though, as their views of the gospel became more extended and clear, they felt increasing dissatisfaction with the doctrines maintained by its ministers. Some of them ventured to remonstrate with two neighbouring clergymen, whom they thought most friendly to their tenets; but met with no redress. This increased their discontent; and prepared their minds to become regular dissenters. Meantime the malice of their enemies invented daily new methods of

harassing them. Many of these poor people, who had large familiars, and depended on the labour of their hands for support, being dismissed by their employers, on account of attending the preaching, were reduced to great distress. Yet they bore all with christian fortitude; and even rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer in so good a cause. [Of this, Mr. Joseph Donisthorpe was a signal instance. The farmers and tradesmen, on whom he depended for employment, took great offence at his frequent religious conversations. They were sorry that he should make such a fool of himself as they chose to term it; and were determined to oblige him to desist. They went, therefore, in a body, to his house; and, in a friendly manner, advised him to leave off exposing himself, and disturbing the village. Finding this mode of attack not likely to succeed, they threatened him, that, if he did not comply with their wishes, they would take all their work from his shop; and hinted, that they had procured another workman to serve them. Having now seven small children, and expecting the eighth, this was a trying occasion, yet he behaved with firmness and propriety. "Gentlemen," said he, "are you pleased with my work?" "Yes," they replied, "we find no fault with that." "And," resumed he, "are my wages reasonable?" "Yes," they replied, "we are satisfied in these respects: our complaints are of a different nature." "These, Gentlemen," continued Mr. Donisthorpe, "are the duties which I owe to you. What concerns God and my own conscience, you have no concern with: God forbid that I should obey you rather than him. The cause is his: and if, for the sake of his cause, you deprive me of the means of obtaining a livelihood, I have no doubt but he will support both me and it." Seeing him thus determined, his employers called for his books; discharged their bills; took away their work unfinished as it was; and left him without any visible resource. Mr. D.'s confidence in the care of the Providence was not disappointed. At first, he thought of traveling the country to do jobs. This scheme strongly recommended itself to him, by the opportunities which it would furnish him of making known the gospel. But, before he could put this design into execution, an unexpected order, from a London gentleman, a perfect stranger, prevented it. He executed the order, received payment for it; and a further order. But other work had then come in: and, before he could set about the goods for London, he accidentally observed the name of his employer in a list of bankrupts. This appeared to him another instance of the care of his heavenly Father; who had supplied his wants in the time of need, and prevented him from suffering by this unforeseen failure. *Gen. Bap. Rep.* Vol. I. pp. 247, 248.]

In the beginning of 1744, the quarter sessions were held at Leicester: when, the cause of the Barton Methodists being heard, they were cast. A decision, so evidently partial and contrary to the law of the country, induced their attorney, Mr. Peck of Leicester, to advise them to carry their case to a higher tribunal. A statement of their case being drawn up, was laid before an eminent counselor, who gave an opinion decidedly opposed to the verdict of the jury, at the sessions. Mr. Peck was, therefore, directed to indict several of the principal offenders at the Crown office. But, though notices of this were sent to the parties, the persecution did not abate. They treated the letters with contempt: and, ostentatiously tearing them in pieces, trampled them under-foot in the streets. The people at Barton continued to be treated in the most outrageous manner: their persecutors, elated with the victory they had obtained, gave a loose to their passions, and deemed it a virtue to harass them by every means they could employ.

At length the Assizes approached, and regular citations were sent to the persons indicted. This roused them to reflection: and, perceiving the dangerous situation in which their excesses had placed them, they sunk into abject despondency. [When the attorney's clerk went to Nailstone to present the citations, most of the persons to whom they were addressed were gone to a fair at Bosworth. The clerk followed; and found them in the midst of their diversions. One young man, of whom he was in quest, was preparing to entertain the mob, with a burlesque imitation of a methodist sermon: and, having mounted a stool, was composing his countenance to the requisite gravity; when the clerk stepped up to him, and, presenting the citation, said, "here, my lad, I'll furnish you with a text." But, alas! the mock parson could not read. He was, however, soon informed of the contents of the paper. This closed his frolic; he instantly descended, and sneaked away in silence: thus becoming himself an object of derision to the laughing spectators. *Gen. Bap. Mag.* Vol. I. p. 289.] The most submissive applications were made, and the most moving intreaties used, to induce those, whom they had so cruelly abused, to stop the proceedings, and not suffer the cause to come to a trial. The Barton friends, wishing only to enjoy their native rights without interruption, consented, at last, to drop the prosecution, on condition that their persecutors would pay all the expences which had, from the first, been occasioned by their violence. As many witnesses had been examined, and several eminent counsel retained, the costs amounted to a considerable sum; and fell heavy on seven or eight of the farmers. Yet the terms were considered as generous; and received by the parties concerned with gratitude: and all further violence was as effectually checked, as it could have been, had the cause proceeded, and large damages been awarded against the offenders. [*Gen. Bap. Mag.* Vol. I. pp. 183-190.]

SECT. 2 – Proceedings of the Barton Preachers, from the Nailstone Persecution to the time when they adopted the practice of Believers' Baptism: or, from A.D. 1743 to A.D. 1755.

Not long after this accommodation, John Taylor, the minister who had shared so largely in this persecution, left Barton, and removed to London: when David Taylor became again the regular preacher. Stephen Dixon, for some time, assisted him in the sacred work; but, forming an acquaintance with the Moravians at Pudsey in Yorkshire, he joined their society; and made some fruitless attempts to form the people at Barton into a Moravian church. In about a year, however, Dixon was excluded, for some cause never fully explained, from the fellowship of the Moravians: and one William Kendrick, his intimate friend, being dissatisfied with the proceedings against Dixon, withdrew from the society at Pudsey. They returned to the Barton people -- and, uniting their efforts, to serve them, were received with exultation.

Though these professors had very imperfect ideas of the nature and importance of church-fellowship: yet a few of them were persuaded, by, their ministers, to form themselves into a society, which they styled a church. This union was no sooner effected, than Messrs. Kendrick and Dixon were chosen elders; and Mrs. Dixon eldress. This first church was formed in 1745, and consisted, at its formation, of only seven members. But many waited to see the result of the attempt; and crowds attended their public labours: so that their numbers increased rapidly, and the cause flourished.

Thus far they had preached in the dwelling houses of their friends ; but the increasing number of hearers now induced them to wish for a meeting-house. With their usual zeal, they soon determined to build one at Barton, the centre of their exertions: which was as quickly executed. The dimensions of this edifice were thirty-six feet by twenty-two. It had a convenient vestry; and a spacious pulpit; in which eight or ten of their preachers sat, on public occasions. Over the whole building, chambers were constructed, designed as apartments for the single brethren and sisters, on the plan of the Moravians. This addition was probably made by Messrs. Dixon and Kendrick, in anticipation of introducing this practice among their new converts: but, if so, they were disappointed; as we find no traces of any such orders in their churches. Though the members of this congregation were, in general, in poor circumstances yet they cheerfully exerted themselves, and defrayed all the expences of this erection. Mr. William Collins, a minister whom Mr. Kendrick invited from London, opened new meeting-house in 1745.

Mr. Collins continuing in the neighbourhood for several weeks, took considerable pains to instruct these inexperienced professors in the nature and design of church-fellowship and discipline: and his efforts produced considerable effect. They appointed weekly conferences of the ministers and members, for mutual edification, and to conduct the affairs of the church. These conferences were held on the Friday evening: and, though many of the ministers resided at a great distance, yet they were regular and punctual in their attendance. Their zeal animated them to exertions, which, in many instances, almost surpass credibility: and their success was proportioned to their zeal.

They were so intent on the great object of winning souls to Christ, that they overlooked minor arrangements. Though they had now existed for several years, they had adopted no name to distinguish them from other professors. Their enemies, indeed, called them Methodists: but they had never been properly connected with that party, and disapproved of several things in their doctrine and discipline. [Some of these preachers, as we have seen, had been connected with the Moravians; and thence their followers were sometimes called Moravians. This outlandish term, however, puzzled their illiterate neighbours, who appear to have had no great relish for hard words. They therefore, anglicized it into the more intelligible appellation, Ravens: and Ravens and Methodists were commonly united as terms of reproach by the persecuting rabble. *Gen. Bap. Rep.* Vol. II. P. 2.] But, having now a regular church, and a meeting-house, it became necessary, for the protection of the public property, to assume some specific appellation. They felt no inclination to rank with any of their neighbours: and, therefore, adopted a denomination, which, though it had long been appropriated to a party of professors, from whom they greatly differed, yet expressed, as they thought, their determination to think and act for themselves, uninfluenced by foreign control; they called themselves Independents. Mr. Dixon and Mr. Kendrick assumed the principal direction of this infant society ; but were assisted, in spreading the gospel, by several others: especially by Messrs. J. Aldridge and J. Whyatt; who had been, for some time, occasionally employed; and were now considered as regular preachers.

In the same year, Mr. Dixon took a journey to London: where he formed an acquaintance with Mr. Ault, a preacher and a school-master: whom he engaged to visit Barton ; and

undertook the charge of his school during his absence. At his return, Mr. Ault found his school so much declined, that he relinquished it; and returned to settle in Leicestershire. Soon afterwards, Mr. Dixon embraced the doctrine of universal salvation; and introduced it into his sermons. This created dissatisfaction in the church and issued in his expulsion. He removed to Annesley Woodhouse: where his conduct soon appeared as unscriptural as his sentiments. This defection made Mr. Ault's assistance the more necessary and acceptable.

Mr. Kendrick continued to labour with increasing approbation. Being a person of more learning and address than the majority of his associates, he acquired considerable influence over them: and, in effect, managed the affairs of the society as he pleased. He opened a boarding school at Barton with considerable success. This required him to be more stationary; and called forth the other preachers to labour more frequently at distant places. They were zealous and active, and pushed forwards their excursions on every side: preaching frequently at Hugglescote, Swannington, Hinkley, and other places in Leicestershire; and even visiting distant villages in the neighbouring counties of Derby, Nottingham and Stafford.

Their hands were also, this year, strengthened by the acquisition of several fellow-labourers. Among the rest, Mr. John Grimley and Mr. Francis Smith, became eminently useful, and deserve notice.

Mr. John Grimley was born at Doninton on the Heath, near Hugglescote, in 1724. This young man was struck with the grandeur and simplicity of the plan of salvation, as exhibited by these preachers: and, after carefully searching the scriptures, and finding it sanctioned by those divine oracles, he determined to take his lot among the despised people who maintained it. Deeply affected with a sense of the importance of divine things, and possessing good natural abilities, he soon became an useful and active preacher of the gospel. [*Gen. Bap. Rep.* Vol. I. P. 57.]

Mr. Francis Smith, an inhabitant of Melbourne, Derbyshire, was born in 1719; and had enjoyed the great advantage of a regular and pious education. He lost both his parents when only sixteen years of age: and thus was left, at that dangerous period of life, without restraint.--Having given the reins to his lusts, for seven years, he was induced, through motives of curiosity, to hear the Methodists: by which means his former impressions were revived; and he was roused to a sense of his danger. He attempted to reform his conduct; and thus qualify himself to receive the divine mercy: but all his efforts were unsuccessful. He saw so much of the vileness of his nature, that he condemned even the means of necessary support. He almost scrupled to eat or sleep, because he thought he was nourishing a body of sin, to make it strong to rebel against God: and he was tempted to relinquish all attention to religion, since, instead of growing more holy, he was convinced, that he was only adding sin to sin. In this state of mind, he went to hear preaching of every denomination, in hopes of obtaining relief; and was especially entangled with the quakers and mystics. At length, he was persuaded to attend the ministers from Barton: and, after carefully comparing their doctrines with the scripture, for more than a year, he was enabled, without any respect to previous qualifications, as a

poor perishing sinner, to repose all his hopes for salvation on the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he found to be Jehovah his Righteousness. He then heartily joined these professors: and, being possessed of a Sound understanding, and a good utterance, he was soon called to assist in their great work; in which his former exercises and inquiries prepared him for great usefulness. He preached his first sermon, in 1746, at Kirby-Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, from Luke 2:10. [*Gen. Bap. Mag.* Vol. 1. pp. 263-267, and 354.]

In 1747, Mr. F. Smith invited his friends to preach at Melbourne: and they cheerfully complied. Their labours in this town were crowned with the usual success: a number of persons were brought to hear the gospel; and, in two or three years, a meeting house was erected. About the same time, Mr. Smith was chosen joint elder with Mr. Kendrick; and was ordained to that office by Mr. William Cudworth, who was then occasionally at Barton. These elders presided over the whole body of the people, who, though in distant places, formed but one society.

At this time, some jealousy arose between Messrs. Kendrick and Ault; who had thus far united their labours, and were looked up to as leaders. A wish to have the pre-eminence appears to have actuated both parties. Mr. Ault, who had probably been a principal instrument of raising an interest in Hinkley, wished to be the elder of that branch, without any dependance on the society at Barton. This was opposed by Mr. Kendrick; who, probably, feared a diminution of his own influence. The contest grew warm, and a separation ensued. Mr. Ault fixed his residence at Hinkley; and, for some time, preached and endeavoured to gather a church, unconnected with his former associates; with whom he was never afterwards re-united. But, after persevering for several years, his congregation dwindled away, and he gave up the attempt.

In the meantime. the preachers from Barton continued their labours at Hinkley, and were blest with encouraging success. Leaving their leaders to dispute for power, these zealous men diligently pursued their great object: and employed all their attention and all their energy in propagating the gospel of the grace of God among their ignorant and perishing neighbours. Nor did they confine their labors to the towns and but often preached in the open air, in

Charnwood-Forest. Sometimes a hollow tree, and sometimes a broken rock, furnished them with pulpits: while the stones or hillocks supplied the hearers with seats. Many heard with attention: but others insulted the preachers; pelting them with stones and filth. Yet these good men were not in the least intimidated, or induced to relax in their exertions: for they had learnt to bear hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

The malice of the enemies of religion did not long confine itself to occasional insults: it soon commenced a more regular attack. The Barton independents availed themselves of the privilege, enjoyed, at that time, by all dissenters, of solemnizing their marriages amongst themselves: and Mr. John Aldridge was thus married to Miss Elizabeth Cooper. A gentleman in the neighbourhood, who had long distinguished himself by his enmity against the methodists, employed the church-warden, as his agent, to indict Mr. Aldridge,

in the Spiritual court, for living in adultery with Miss Cooper. Such a cruel and base attempt to destroy the peace, and blast the reputation of a worthy family, excited the indignation of all good men. Dr. Turville, of Thurlaston, assisted Mr. Aldridge, on this trying occasion, with his advice and countenance: and, after a full investigation, the court declared, that the marriage was legal. The church-warden, fearing a prosecution for defamation, made ample satisfaction to the injured persons: and it was thought that the affair was concluded.

But this defeat only inflamed the rage of the principal instigator: who continued to take every opportunity of insulting Mr. Aldridge and his friends, by hooting at them when they passed him in the streets, and inciting others to abuse them. One evening, as Mr. Aldridge, his wife, and several of their companions, were returning home from a social visit, they were met by a tumultuous rabble, headed by their implacable enemy. The unoffending Methodists were driven off the path, thrown down on the ground, and inhumanly kicked about by the infamous leader and his savage followers: and, at last, were compelled to shelter themselves from the fury of the assailants, in the house of a relative. This violent outrage obliged Mr. Aldridge to seek protection from the laws of his country, by commencing a prosecution against the principal offender: and the cause was brought to trial at the Leicester Assizes, Aug. 1751. All the influence that could be procured was employed on the side of the defendant: and the jury were overheard, during the trial, agreeing to return a verdict in his favour, whatever evidence might be brought against him. The prosecutor, on the contrary, rested his cause on notorious facts, proved by witnesses of unimpeachable characters; whose testimony was given in a manner so simple and yet so clear, as to gain immediate credit. [The manner in which Joseph Donisthorpe who was one of the witnesses on this trial introduced his testimony, made a solemn impression on the whole court. "I am sensible, my Lord," said he, "that I now stand before not only an earthly judge, but I am also in the presence of the Judge of heaven; and being accountable hereafter for all I say, shall speak the truth." Gen. Bap. Mag. Vol. I. P. 325.] The judge observed, that it was impossible to weaken the proof, by any opposite evidence; and advised the offender to come to terms of accommodation with the prosecutor; naming a sum which he thought ought to be paid as a penalty. The defendant refused to comply with this proposal: but, after some consideration, agreed to pay a smaller sum which was accepted and the case dismissed. Thus the equity of the judge defeated the wickedness of the jury; of whose partiality, it is probable, he entertained some suspicion: and these, harassed people were secured in the quiet enjoyment of their civil and religious rights. So important, did they esteem this victory, and so gratefully did they acknowledge the signal interposition of Providence in the result, that the eighth day of August was annually observed by them as a day of thanksgiving, as long as the society continued united. It was spent in singing, preaching, and prayer, and closed with a feast of charity.

It is probable, that, when these honest men began to publish the glad tidings of salvation, they were not aware that it was necessary to have any other licence than the command of their great Master, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Their experience, however, had now taught them, that this would not secure them from the rage of wicked men. They, therefore, determined to claim the protection of the Act of

Toleration: and Joseph Donisthorpe, John Whyatt, John Aldridge, Samuel Deacon, Francis Smith, and John Grittiley, registered themselves, as dissenting ministers, at the quarter sessions at Leicester. Protected thus by the laws of their country, and animated by an ardent love for immortal souls, they prosecuted their great design with increasing vigour and success. Mr. Samuel Follows, of Castle Donington, introduced them into that town; where they very soon collected numerous and attentive congregations. Curiosity brought several persons, from the adjacent village of Diseworth: who, being convinced of the importance of the great truths which they heard were anxious to have them proclaimed to their neighbours. The ministers, willing to enter at every door which Providence opened for them, instantly complied with their wishes. They went to Diseworth: and commenced their labours in a weaver's shop. But this humble beginning soon led to important consequences. In a short time, a numerous society was formed: and, in 1752, a commodious meeting-house erected.

Among those who attended at Diseworth, were Mr. J Bradley of Whatton, and Mr. Williant Holines of Kegworth. The former returned home from the first sermon so much impressed, that, on entering his apartment, he exclaimed to his wife, "Mary, it is not of works, at last!"--a plain indication, at once, of the state of his own mind, and of the doctrine which he had heard. Mr. Bradley afterwards removed to Kegworth and was very instrumental in promoting the cause of religion in that town. Mr. Holmes had lately commenced business, and was a respectable young man. One Lord's-day morning, in the summer of 1753, he attended at the parish church of Kegworth, and heard a sermon, from Micah 6:6-8. In the evening of the same day, he walked to Diseworth, and heard Mr. Grimley preach from the same text. The sermon, however, was entirely new; and both surprized and affected him. From that period, he attended regularly at Diseworth: and, after suffering considerable distress of mind, before the close of the year, found comfort in his Saviour.

A few other inhabitants of Kegworth attended at Diseworth: and, feeling the value of the truths of the gospel, were desirous to bring them, into their own neighbourhood. They even ventured to form a wish to build a house for God at Kegworth. Seven or eight of these zealous young converts met together, one evening, to consult on the subject. Though generally poor men, twenty guineas were soon cheerfully subscribed: and Mr. Bradley, who had purchased some land in the town, offered to accommodate them with a part of it. Thus encouraged, they ventured to proceed: and, to prevent expence, gave their personal labour, as well as their money, to the good design. The building being soon completed, was opened, June 15th, 1755, by Mr. Donisthorpe. The cause prospered; their numbers increased: and, in a short time, the whole debt was discharged. [G.B.R. Vol. III. pp. 51,52.. *G.B. Mag.* Vol. I. p. 407.]

Mr. Dixon, as we have seen, when he left Barton, settled at Annesley Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, where he raised a small congregation. But his conduct proving immoral, the people excluded him: and applied for ministerial aid to the Barton preachers. These indefatigable men readily engaged to supply them: and their labours were blest, to the conversion of sinners. In 1755, a meeting-house was built at a neighbouring village, named Kirby-Woodhouse. Mr. Abraham Booth, and his parents,

appear to have been among the first fruits of their ministry, in this place. Though then only twenty-two years of age, he joined these despised people, and soon became eminently useful. [*G.B. Mag.* Vol. I. p. 407. *G.B. Rep.* Vol. II. P. 121.]

About the year 1753, preaching was introduced into the populous town of Loughborough, by Mr. Thomas Hutchinson. Mr. Whyatt delivered the first discourse in that place, from Isa. 53:6, in the dwelling-house of Mr. William Cheate; who kindly opened his doors for the purpose. So few of the inhabitants were friendly to the cause, that it was with difficulty five signatures could be obtained, to a request for a licence for the place of worship. Yet a considerable number of the inhabitants attended; and many heard with seriousness; though the greatest number went with an Avowed intent to ridicule and persecute. The mob collected round the house, in the time of service; and endeavoured, by clamour and sometimes by the beating of drums, to interrupt the attention the hearers. Often they proceeded further: and threw stones and dirt through the windows. Once they seized a woman, as she came out of the meeting; and dragged her along a deep kennel, full of mire and filth, by the hair of her head: reviling her continually with the epithets of *raven* and *methodist*. The ministers endeavoured to check these violent proceedings, by an appeal to the magistrates: but a witness accidentally mistaking the date of one of these atrocities, this slip of memory was made the pretence of rejecting their appeal: and their enemies renewed their assaults with increased fury. The rabble collected round the door of the court, and followed the friends of religion, with triumphant insult, through the town so that they escaped with difficulty to their own houses. Foiled in this attempt, they employed an attorney, to seek redress in the higher courts who sent a letter to the most active of the persecutors, stating the probable consequences of their violent conduct. An intimation of this nature, from a person of character, put a stop to personal insults; and the enemies of religion confined themselves to hooting, shouting, and similar expressions of ill will. These harmless effusions of restrained malice were despised and neglected:-- the ministers continued their labours, and the cause daily gained ground. [*G.B. Mag.* Vol. I. p. 407. *G.B. Rep.* Vol. II. P. 2,3.]

SECT. 3—The proceedings of the Barton Preachers, and their Associates, from their commencing Baptists to the Division into distinct Churches: or, from A.D. 1755 to A.D. 1760.

These good men, when they first began to preach salvation by faith, appear to have entertained no design of forming a party. Their great object evidently was, to incite their careless neighbours, whom they saw perishing on every hand, to flee from the wrath to come. An union of object and similarity of spirit produced co-operation: and societies arose from their mutual zeal to promote each other's spiritual welfare. They continued to consider themselves members of the established church: and, from a principle of conscience, regularly attended her worship. But their application to religion naturally led them to acquire a more accurate acquaintance with divine subjects: and this knowledge produced and nourished dissatisfaction, with the doctrine, the worship and the discipline of the church of England. Unmerited persecution heightened their disapprobation; and, at length, compelled them to declare themselves dissenters.

Yet, even then, they had their system to form. Unacquainted with the volumes of theology, unconcerned in the controversies among professors and unknown, almost

totally, to the more ancient dissenters, they had no guide but the Bible. That sacred book they carefully and impartially studied; and determined to make it the standard of their faith and the rule of their practice. From this volume, under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, they gradually corrected the errors which they had imbibed; and formed themselves into regular churches of Christ.

Their preachers had early conceived some doubts on the subject of baptism, which led them to appeal to their infallible directory. But their prejudices were not easily removed. They quickly discovered that the scripture mode of baptism was immersion; and resolved to practise it. For this purpose, a large tub was placed in their, meeting-house; in which the ministers dipped their infants. This custom they seem to have maintained for several years. [*G.B. Mag.* Vol. I. p. 358.—Mr. Josiah Thompson, who wrote an account of these people, in 1774, which he had collected from the parties themselves, says, “For about twelve years they practiced infant baptism by immersion.” J.T. MSS.] At length, they were compelled to acknowledge, that the New Testament no more authorized the baptism of infants than it did sprinkling. They had flattered themselves, that the example of the blessed Saviour, gave some countenance to their practice: but a more impartial examination convinced them, that there was not the least allusion to baptism in the whole transaction. They discovered that, “Jesus himself baptized not:” but took children in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.” Determined to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he went,” they removed their vessels for immersion; and brought their infants, in the time of public service, to the minister: who, taking them in his arms, pronounced an affectionate benediction on them; using, on this occasion, the words in which Aaron and his sons were instructed to bless the children of Israel. “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” [Num. 6:22-27.] Suitable admonitions to the parents, and earnest and affectionate prayer for them, and their offspring, concluded the solemn and interesting transaction. We have no account how long this practice continued: but, as it was no ways inconsistent. with the principles of believers, baptism, it was, probably retained for some time after they adopted that practice. [*G.B. Mag.* Vol. I. pp. 358-360.]

In proportion as the grounds of infant sprinkling vanished, the arguments for believers’ baptism appeared the more conclusive. They found, that the New Testament not only required repentance and faith, as indispensable prerequisites to baptism; but also made it the duty of every one, who professed to repent and believe, to be baptized. Yielding, therefore, to the authority of scripture, and to the dictates of conscience, they determined, after serious examination for several years, to obey the command of their Saviour; and personally to devote themselves to his service, in this sacred ordinance. They were led to this conclusion, neither by reading the writings of the advocates of believers’ baptism, nor by conversation with baptists: but simply by reading and studying the word of God. [The writer, mentioned in the last note, observes, “In 1755, they adopted the sentiments of the Baptists, both with respect to the subject and the mode of baptism. This change of sentiment arose, neither from reading any books on the subject, nor from conversation with any persons of that persuasion: but merely from searching the scriptures, and from thence being persuaded, that so had the Lord commanded.” J.T. MSS.]

They were now baptists in sentiment: but, in reducing their creed to practice, a considerable difficulty occurred. None of their ministers had been baptized by immersion, on a profession of faith: and, therefore, according to their new views, they were all in an unbaptized state; and unqualified to administer the ordinance to others. If they had any acquaintance, at that time, with other baptists, either general or particular, it was very slight: and they felt no inclination to solicit their assistance. Indeed, had they applied to any of the regular ministers of that day, when discipline was more rigorously exercised than at present, it is probable, that, considering their obscure state and imperfect organization, they would have been refused. After much consideration, they had recourse to the expedient usual in such cases. It was agreed, that Mr. Donisthorpe should first baptize Mr. Kendrick, and then Mr. Kendrick should baptize him: after which, they should unite in administering the ordinance to the rest of their associates. This was accordingly performed, about the middle of November, 1735; when, between sixty and seventy of these professors thus solemnly devoted themselves to the service of their Saviour. [*G.B. Mag.* Vol. I. pp. 358, 360. *G.B. Rep.* Vol. I. pp. 52. 249. Vol. II. P. 120. Vol. III. P. 53.—It has been seen, in the former part of this work, that Mr. Smyth and his friends experienced the same difficulty, as to obtaining a proper administrator; and adopted the same method. Thus, also, Mr. Roger Williams, and a few others, who, in the middle of the seventeenth century, founded the first baptist church in America, in a similar perplexity, appointed Mr. Holliman to baptize Mr.. Williams; after which, Mr. Williams baptized Mr. Holliman and ten others. And, when a few pious Germans, residing in Pennsylvania, at the beginning of the last century, had, by reading the scriptures and mutual conversation, been convinced of the divine appointment of believers' baptism, and were unable to procure assistance from, a regular baptist, they chose one of their number, by lot, to administer the ordinance to the rest: and thus laid the foundation of the party afterwards called Tunkers or Dippers. It is remarkable, that, in all these cases, so entirely distinct, and, probably unknown to each other, the same means should have been used to restore the ordinance: and that the Barton people, who, it is almost certain, had never heard of any of these transactions, should adopt the same expedient. *Supra*, Vol. I. pp. 71, 82-85, Ivimey's *English Bap.* Vol. I. p. 563. *Bap. Mag.* Vol. V. p. 333.]

The adoption of believers' baptism involved these young professors in perplexities of a different nature. As they were all independents, and claimed the privilege of thinking and acting for themselves, it was not to be expected, that all would, at one time, arrive at the same conclusion. Several, in fact, who were members of their society, and sat down with them at the Lord's table, disapproved the opinion of the majority, and continued unbaptized. This did not, however, exclude them from communion; but they were permitted still to enjoy all their former privileges. It does not indeed appear, that, for some time, baptism was made a term of communion, or considered as giving a title to the fellowship of the church. Attention to it was urged on their hearers, as a duty required of them by the command of Christ; and they were earnestly pressed to prompt obedience. in some cases, it is probable, that their zeal misled them; and they were not sufficiently cautious in examining the characters of those whom they baptized: but being baptized gave the party no right to the other privileges of communion.

Thus, after they became baptists, their society consisted of four distinct classes of members. The lowest were such as professed a concern for eternal things, who enjoyed a degree of fellowship, though they were neither admitted to baptism, nor the Lord's supper: the second comprized those who had been baptized, but were not communicants: unbaptized communicants composed the third: and the fourth, or highest class, consisted of baptized communicants. These classes, which appear to have partly to have been borrowed from the Methodists, were maintained as long as these professors continued to act as one body; but were soon laid aside when they divided into distinct churches. [*Gen. Bap. Mag.* Vol. I. p. 360.]

This important change in the sentiments and practice of these people did not relax their exertions for the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of sinners; nor diminish their success. Preaching had not continued more than three years, in the dwelling-house at Loughborough, before the increase of regular hearers obliged them to look out for more spacious accommodations. Mr. Oldershaw, who was friendly to the cause, having a barn at liberty, offered to fit it up as a meeting-house, and let it to the congregation. The proposal being readily accepted, the proper alterations were made; and the preachers from Barton and Melbourn attended regularly every Lord's-day: besides conducting a week-day-evening meeting for prayer and exhortation.--The hearers still increased, and religion appeared to be daily extending its influence, when this rising interest received a check from the dreams of enthusiasm.

A collar maker, from the Vale of Belvoir, who has since been known by the appellation of the Little Prophet, pretended to have received a commission from heaven, to lead the army of the saints to the valley of Jehoshaphat, to destroy Gog and Magog and the whole host of the ungodly; and thus to introduce the Millennium. To uphold it's claims, he began to make preparations for his proposed march, and actually nominated some of the principal officers who were to serve under his standard. When we consider the success which pretensions still more absurd have recently obtained, among persons who have enjoyed means of instruction far superior to those possessed by the friends of Loughborough, at this time, we shall not wonder that the Little Prophet deluded a few of the weaker members of the congregation. And it reflects no small honour on the memory of the preachers, whose spirits must have been warmed by persecution, and elevated by success, and who had borrowed little assistance from human learning, that they uniformly opposed this fanatic, and adhered steadily to the words of truth and soberness. Their firmness preserved many from being led away by this delusion: and the failure of one of the most remarkable predictions of the prophet completed his confusion, and sunk him into deserved contempt. [*G.B. Rep.* Vol. II. P. 3,4.]

The cause at Loughborough received a valuable addition, during this period, in Mr. William Parkinson, a respectable farmer of Quorndon. He had been awakened to a concern for the salvation of his soul, by conversing with a young man who had joined the new preachers. Mr. Parkinson long refused to attend these despised ministers, through fear of losing the countenance of his family, who were violently prejudiced against them. But, having settled at Quortidon, at a distance from his friends at Sawley in Derbyshire,

he frequently went to spend the Sabbath with them. One morning, passing through Kegworth for that purpose, he heard singing in the general baptist meeting-house; and, being partial to that exercise, was induced to enter. Curiosity prompted him to hear the discourse, which was delivered by Mr. F. Smith, from that awful text, Prov. 1:24-28. This roused his fears, and caused him to attend occasionally on the labours of these zealous men; though, for two years, under the influence of carnal pride, he went with great secrecy. The powerful application of our Saviour's declaration, "Whosoever is ashamed of me and my words before men, of him will I be ashamed, before my Father and his holy angels," constrained him, at last, to make an open and manly profession of his attachment to those whom he was compelled to esteem as the friends of the truth. His views of the scripture way of salvation growing more correct, and his soul obtaining peace in believing, he proposed himself to the society; and was baptized May 8th, 1759. He continued long a valuable member, and a great support of the cause of Christ. Three of his brothers, and several branches of the family, following his example, successively joined general baptist churches; and were eminently useful and honourable. *

[* *G. B. Mag.* Vol. 1, pp. 503-505.--Among others, the Mayor of Derby wrote a letter on their behalf, signed by himself and four respectable gentlemen; which we insert below, as it bears unsuspected evidence to the moral character of the parties,

"We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, are informed of an indictment against Mr. Thos. Robinson and Mr. Gen, Turner, both of Melbourn, in this county of Derby, for doing something contrary to the customs of the excise; which we have reason to believe is more the effect of an oppressive spirit in those into whose hands they are fallen, than any fraud or design in the persons thus indicted.

"The two above persons transact a good deal of business in this town, and are well esteemed by all with whom they trade, as men of veracity and integrity; and have always approved themselves good and loyal subjects to his majesty king George:--men whom we can heartily recommend to deserve the liberty the Act of Toleration intitled them to.

"We are, Gentlemen,
Your most humble servants,
Samuel Crompton, Mayor of Derby,
Joseph Smith, John Bingham, Robert Bakewell, Thomas Milnes."
Aug. 27th. 1759.]

The cause of religion prospered, for a short space, at Kegworth: and the prospects were highly encouraging. Frequently upwards of five hundred persons attended their public worship; and opposition vanished before them. But the scene soon changed. In their eagerness to spread the gospel, they were sometimes inattentive to the instruments they employed. A person was encouraged to preach, whose abilities were unequal to the sacred work, and whose conduct was irregular. This excited disgust in sensible observers, and prepared their minds for taking offence. Soon afterwards, considerable dissension arose on subjects of doctrine. Many openly espoused the tenets of Antinomianism: and the disputes were conducted with so much heat and animosity, that the society at

Kegworth was dissolved. And, though the friends of truth and peace soon effected a re-union of many of the members; yet not a few forsook the preachers, and adhered to the system which they had recently adopted.

But while the cause was thus distracted at Kegworth, the seed which had been sown there was, in other places, bringing forth abundant fruit. Curiosity had led many persons from Leake, in Nottinghamshire, to hear the new preachers at Kegworth: divers of whom became deeply affected; and, in a short time, heartily joined their society. These young converts frequently conversed with their neighbours on eternal subjects, and opened a meeting for prayer and exhortation at Leake. The clergy took the alarm at these strange proceedings; and a violent persecution commenced. But the dissenters applied to the magistrate; who honourably interfered, and obliged their enemies to make them compensation. Yet, though public opposition was suppressed, private malice continued to harass them: and often reduced them to circumstances that tried the sincerity of their attachment to the cause of their Redeemer.

Among these sufferers for the sake of a good conscience, the zealous and pious Mr. Nathaniel Bennett was justly distinguished. He had a large family and depended for support chiefly on a farm which he rented. When he commenced baptist, some of the neighbouring clergy incensed his landlord against him: and the alternative was proposed to his choice, either to renounce his religious connections, or to quit all visible means of subsistence. Great as the sacrifice was, this good man did not hesitate; but cheerfully cast himself and his dependents on the care of Providence, rather than deny his Saviour or desert his friends. He was, accordingly, driven from his habitation, and compelled to seek a shelter where he could. For some time, his efforts appeared ineffectual. The little property which he had previously acquired, rapidly, declined; and poverty seemed to approach with hasty steps: yet he still retained his dependence on God, and steadily adhered to the path of duty. Nor had he occasion to be ashamed of his confidence. He received, even in this life, an abundant compensation for all that he had forsaken for Christ; and finished his course with joy, in the happy anticipation of enjoying an inheritance that fadeth not away. The Lord has also been very gracious to his offspring: many of whom are now walking honourably in the steps of their pious and worthy ancestor.

In the midst of this public and private opposition, the cause of vital religion continued to prosper at Leake; and the number of hearers daily increased. It was soon found necessary to provide a larger place of worship. A suitable piece of ground for a meeting-house was obtained of Mr. Thomas Clark, who also generously accommodated the friends with a loan of one hundred pounds, to assist in the erection. All the influence that could be obtained by the enemies of religion, was vigorously exerted, to prevent the completion of this design; but the zeal and perseverance of the baptists, under the blessing of heaven, surmounted all obstacles and a neat and commodious chapel was opened, in 1756; which added new vigour to their proceedings. Many attended the worship, from adjacent villages, and even from distant places. This naturally induced the preachers to visit them at their own homes; and thus, in a short time, the gospel was introduced into many of the neighbouring districts. [*G. B. Mag.* Vol. I. pp. 405, 406, and P. I.]

The labours of these ministers continued to be abundantly blest at Hinkley, and its environs. Among the first converts, in that town, were Mr. Thomas Perkins, afterwards an useful preacher, and Mr. John Shipman, who, for a long period, sustained the office of ruling elder in that church. They soon pushed their exertions into Warwickshire, and founded an interest in the vicinity of Longford, near Coventry. Robert Sheffield, a young member of the society at Diseworth, going to work at Exhall, in that neighbourhood, boarded with a dissenting family of the Independent persuasion. Being zealous to propagate his peculiar sentiments, he introduced them frequently in conversation; and with such success that the daughter of his host was persuaded to attend the preaching at Hinkley, though at the distance of eight or nine miles. After due examination, she renounced the doctrine of personal election, and cordially embraced the important truth, that "Jesus tasted death for every man." Her family were much grieved at this change; and, after private exhortation had failed, proposed the purpose of fully discussing the points in debate, a meeting of the independent minister and his friends, with some of the leading men among the new preachers. These zealous men accepted the challenge with alacrity; and the conference took place in the vestry of the independent meeting-house at Bedworth, near Exhall. But, on this occasion, these champions ventured out of their sphere. However able to propose the plain truths of the gospel to perishing sinners, they certainly were wholly unacquainted with the arts of controversy. They were, therefore, easily disconcerted, and driven to substitute clamour for argument. This imprudent rencounter afforded not only triumph to their enemies, but also a pretence to the rabble to insult and persecute them. And the young woman, persisting in her adherence to her new principles, was discarded by her parents, and obliged to seek refuge among the friends at Hinkley and Barton. After some months, she returned on a visit to Exhall; and succeeded in persuading her brother, with Mr. William Smith and his wife, and a few other neighbours, to attend at Hinkley.

Mr. W. Smith was soon convinced of the truth of these new doctrines: and, being a zealous man, and desirous to promote the eternal welfare of his neighbours, conversed freely on these important topics with any who would hear him. An uproar was quickly raised in the parish, and the vicar became alarmed. He sent for Mr. Smith, and held a long debate with him on the subject of salvation by faith. They parted, as disputants usually do, each confirmed in his own opinion. The next morning, the clergyman sent to inquire of Mr. Smith what he called himself, and with which class of dissenters he chose to rank. This, probably, was a point which the new convert himself had hardly settled: and, therefore, feeling no inclination to satisfy the curiosity of the inquirer, he abruptly replied to the servant who brought the message, "Tell your master, that I am a christian." The vicar, irritated by this laconic answer, sent back the servant to inform Mr. Smith, that, unless he refrained from conversing with the parishioners on the subject of religion, he might expect to suffer for his interference. But this village pope entirely mistook the character of his opponent. Mr. Smith was not to be deterred by threats from what he felt to be his duty; and indignantly returned, "Tell your master, that I regard neither him nor his persecution: for I mean to go to heaven myself, and to take all I can with me." This spirited message so increased the clergyman's wrath, that he took every opportunity of railing against, these innovators. He carried his hostility into the pulpit, and made them

and their heresies *the* constant themes of his public discourses. All this, however, had an effect directly contrary to the old vicar's wishes. The curiosity of his neighbours was excited: and many went to hear what these babblers would say. Proselytes were daily made; and, in 1760, a house at Longford was licensed for preaching. This increased the rage of the enemies of the gospel, and the mob was encouraged to interrupt their worship. Gross outrages were committed; but an appeal being made to the magistrate for protection, the fury of their persecutors was checked, and the cause was carried forwards with vigour and success. [*G. B. Mag.* Vol. II. pp. 20-25, and *P.I.* Vol. II.]

The interest at Melbourn had prospered in such a degree, that it was now considered as the second station of the society: Barton still holding the first place. Once a month, the Lord's supper was administered among these people; and, for the accommodation of the communicants, it was celebrated alternatively at Barton and Melbourn.

On these occasions, frequently more than one hundred members attended, from distant parts. It was impossible to accommodate such numbers with necessary refreshment, during their stay, at the expence of individuals; and it would have been disagreeable to have resorted to public houses on so solemn a day: they, therefore, adopted a plan, which, as they thought, united economy and conveniency. A plain dinner was provided at a friend's house; and each person paid voluntarily, to the deacons, what he thought proper, towards the expence. The liberality of some supplied the penury of others; and the poor were usually entertained either gratuitously or on very easy terms. Sometimes the contributions exceeded the expence; and the surplus went to the common stock: at other times, they fell short; and the deficiency was supplied from the same fund. They had no suspicion of any illegality in their proceedings; and, therefore, took no care to conceal them. Indeed, many intelligent persons have thought, that, as no demand was made, nor profit sought, there was no breach of any statute; though an artful villain made this hospitable custom the means of involving them in very heavy expences.

A stranger settled at Melbourn, as a barber; and, by degrees, formed an acquaintance with the baptists. he regularly attended their meetings, appeared much affected under their sermons, and, at length, professed his desire to join their society. The overture was received with joy by these unsuspecting and sanguine people: and he was admitted, to all their privileges. He attended these social dinners, and observed the manner of conducting them. Having obtained his purpose, he abruptly forsook the society, and lodged information against them for a breach of the excise laws. Several of the principal persons concerned, both at Barton and Melbourn, were, in consequence, summoned before the magistrates; and, on the oath of this barber only, condemned to pay a fine of fifty pounds for each place. Considering the poverty of the majority of their friends, and the exertions they were constantly making in building meeting-houses, and maintaining the cause, this heavy penalty was severely felt. But, though every means were used to procure a mitigation of the sentence, and several respectable characters kindly stepped forwards as their advocates, they were obliged to pay the uttermost farthing.

This, certainly, was a heavy loss to the infant cause; but a circumstance succeeded still more afflictive. Mr. Kendrick had, from the first rise of this people, been looked up to as

a leader; though, on several occasions, he had manifested too great a desire of power. But, about this time, several reports to the disadvantage of his moral character were circulated. These, at first, were neglected; till they became so numerous, and assumed so serious an aspect, that the credit of the society required their investigation. Several meetings of the preachers and principal members were held: and, though that unhappy man vehemently denied the truth of the accusations, yet the evidence against him was so clear, that the society was obliged to exclude him from their fellowship, and to dissolve all communion with him. What rendered the business still more unpleasant, was a circumstance which, till then, had not been noticed. He had artfully got possession of the deeds of several meeting-houses: and the people were obliged to pay him a sum of money, to induce him to surrender those important documents. At last, after much trouble and disgrace, a total separation was effected.--The fury of wicked men may harass the church of God, and the power of tyrants may persecute his saints even unto death; but it is in the house of its friends, by the apostacy of its ministers, that the gospel receives its most deadly wounds, and its enemies obtain the most complete triumph. [*Gen. Bap. Mag.* Vol. 1. p. 408.]

SECT. 4--The Division of the Society into Five Churches: and their Progress from the Period of that Division to the Commencement of the New Connection: or, from A.D. 1760 to A.D. 1770.

The unhappy and deplorable fall of Mr. Kendrick, not only exposed this rising interest to much ridicule and reproach, but left it without a head. The preachers, in general, eager on their great work of spreading the gospel, had left the management of their internal affairs, and the government of the society, in a great measure, to Mr. Kendrick: and he, possessing some literary advantages and considerable address, had ruled among them with almost dictatorial authority. When. they lost him, they were, therefore, reduced to great perplexity. The cause had spread over a large tract of country, to places far distant from each other; and the number of members had greatly increased. No fewer than one hundred and sixty were in full communion; and vast crowds who attended their meetings were, in a greater or less degree, connected with them. To superintend the concerns of so extended and complicated a society, required persons of more experience and greater leisure than their preachers; who had enjoyed few opportunities of gaining general knowledge, and were closely engaged in labouring with their hands, for the support of their families.

Two of their preachers, however, possessed some advantages over their associates. Messrs. J. Grimley and A. Booth, though no less zealous in proclaiming the good news of salvation to perishing sinners, had applied themselves, in an especial manner, to the investigation of the nature of a church of Christ, and of the proper mode of discipline required in it: and had read some valuable works on that important subject. They, therefore, availed themselves of the confusion caused by Mr. Kendrick's exclusion, to propose the formation of distinct churches: which, being less extended, and under the eye of resident pastors, would, as they pleaded, more effectually, promote the edification of every part, and the extension of the cause. After frequent discussion, it was agreed, that the whole body which had hitherto been united as one society, should be divided into five

distinct and independent societies; which, from the principal place of meeting, were denominated, the Barton, Melbourn, Kegworth, Loughborough, and Kirby-Woodhouse churches. Among these congregations, the ministers were distributed, with as tender a regard as possible to the feelings of individuals, and the good of the whole. But, though thus divided and independent of each other, they still maintained the most friendly intercourse. Monthly meetings of the ministers were held, for mutual advice and assistance: and quarterly conferences met, at each place in rotation; when one or two sermons were preached by the ministers of other churches. On these occasions, many of the members from a distance attended; and expressed much satisfaction and edification. Let us now take a brief survey of these several churches, from the time of the division to the commencement of the New Connection.

Barton church included, at the period of the division, Barton, Hugglescote, Stanton, Markfield, Hinkley, and Longford. The ministers assigned to this Society were, John Whyatt, of Barton, Samuel Deacon, of Ratby, and John Aldridge, of Hugglescote. For some time, the cause flourished, and the members increased.--The ordinance of the Lord's supper was administered monthly, at Barton, and Hugglescote alternately; and though the distance at which many of the communicants lived was upwards of twenty miles, yet these solemnities were well attended. But this distance, and the increase of the members, rendered it necessary, in 1766, to divide the society into two churches: Hinkley and Longford forming one; and Barton, Hugglescote, and Ratby the other, over which Messrs. Whyatt, Deacon and Aldridge still remained pastors.

But differences on points of doctrine soon began to arise among the Barton friends, which caused considerable uneasiness. Mr. Aldridge's mind being much affected with the debates, and having previously entertained some doubts respecting his call to the ministry, he now totally declined the sacred work: though he continued an honourable private member of the church to his death. This augmented the burden of the other two pastors, who were both labouring men; and depended on their own industry for their support. Though they had not only lost much time, but incurred considerable expence, by their ministerial engagements: yet they had hitherto received no remuneration from the society by which they were employed. It now occurred to some of the more considerate members, that their pastors ought to have some assistance. This reasonable suggestion was unanimously approved by the church; and immediate arrangements were made to carry it into effect. But some unpleasant circumstances in the conduct of Mr. Wyatt made it necessary, in 1770, after much external reproach and internal altercation, to exclude him from the society: when Mr. Deacon was left alone to serve this extended church. Yet, under all these discouragements, the cause gained ground: for, at the commencement of the New Connection, in 1770, this society consisted of one hundred and twenty members.

The members, who, in 1766, separated from, Barton, and formed the church at Hinkley and *Longford*, amounted to fifty. Four years previous to this separation, Mr. W. Smith, of Longford, whom we have already mentioned, had begun to preach; and, soon after, Mr. George Hickling, who had removed from Costock in Nottinghamshire, engaged in the same sacred work. The labours of these two ministers, especially of the latter, were well approved by their friends; and, at the division, they were ordained joint pastors over the

new church. The cause of Christ prospered in their hands; and, at the, first baptism, twenty-five persons were added to the church. In 1763, a new meeting-house was built at Longford; and, in 1678, another was opened at Hinkley. Mr. G. Toone,* a valuable member of this church, who resided at Wolvey, had long been desirous of introducing the gospel to his neighbours. He was the first dissenter in the village, and encountered much opposition and reproach; but unintimidated by difficulty, he opened his house for religious worship, in 1768: which was conducted by Messrs. John and Richard Shipman, occasional preachers at Hinkley.--In 1770, the Hinkley, or, as it is termed in the Minutes of the Association, the Longford church, consisted of two pastors, one ruling elder, four deacons, and one hundred and seventy members: religion flourished and the hearers were numerous.

[* The attention of Mr. Toone to religious subjects was first excited by a serious remark, at the close of a letter on business which he received from Mr. Bradley of Kegworth. This apparently trifling circumstance led to very important consequences. Under the divine blessing, it awakened this careless youth to earnest inquiry after the way of salvation, which issued in a surrender of himself to the Lord. He opened his house for preaching, and numbers attended who had never heard the gospel. In a short time, a commodious meeting-house was erected, in this dark village, which has since been enlarged: and, for many years, a numerous congregation have worshipped in it. A distinct church has, for some time, formed at Wolvey, which now consists of upwards of eighty members. Many happy souls, there is good reason to believe, have already arrived in glory from this hill of Zion; and many others are now travelling in the straight road that leads to eternal life.--What an encouragement to seize every proper occasion either in conversation or correspondence, to drop a serious hint or introduce a religious observation! G.B.R. Vol. III. p. 228. Min. Ann. Asso. 1815.]

Melbourn was the second of the churches formed at the division, in 1760; and included Packington, Measham, Swannington and Ticknall. About forty persons were, at first, united in this society: and Francis Smith and Thomas Perkins were ordained joint pastors over them. The ministers employed, on this occasion, were, Mr. A. Booth, who gave the charge [from Acts 20:18]; Mr. J. Grimley, who addressed the people [from 1 Thess. 5:12,13]; Messrs. Tarratt and Donisthorpe, who engaged in prayer; and Mr. J. Aldridge, who gave out the hymns. This event afforded great satisfaction to the people; as they highly esteemed the abilities and characters of their pastors. These ministers, indeed, were well qualified to labour in concert: Mr. Perkins' discourses being peculiarly adapted to rouse the careless sinner to a sense of his danger, and to alarm his fears; while Mr. Smith's disposition led him to draw the wounded soul, by the cords of love; and, with the tenderest sympathy to encourage him to seek peace, through faith in a crucified Saviour, whose affection and sufferings were the favourite themes of his public ministrations. With such overseers, the church spread itself on every side: and many were frequently added to its number. Some of these converts resided at Packington, where preaching had, for several years, been maintained, in the dwelling house of Richard Tompson. But, the hearers increasing, a large barn was engaged, in 1762, on a long lease; and fitted up for public worship: which was soon well filled; and many attended from distant places.--At Melbourn, also, the congregation augmented so much, that, in 1768, they were obliged to

enlarge their meeting-house, at an expence of one hundred and twenty pounds: which they cheerfully raised by a subscription among themselves. About the same time, they introduced preaching at Worthington and Ticknall. At the former place, their success was small; and they soon relinquished the attempt: but, at the latter, several were added to the church; and preaching has continued there to the present time. In 1770, the church at Melbourn consisted of two pastors, two ruling elders, five deacons, and one hundred and sixty members: religion appeared flourishing, and many were waiting for admission.

Kegworth church included Castle-Donington, Diseworth, and numerous adjacent villages.--Over this church, Mr. N. Pickering of Castle Donington, and Mr. John Tarratt, of Kegworth, were ordained joint pastors. These ministers exerted themselves, with great diligence and signal success, in spreading the gospel among their benighted neighbours. Among other places at which they regularly preached, was Sawley, in Derbyshire. On May 8th, 1766, Mr. N. Pickering was preaching, in a dwelling house, in that village, when the curate of the parish, much intoxicated, came, at the head of a numerous mob, many of whom were in the same state as their leader; and, entering the room, ordered the preacher to cease, or they would put him in the stocks. Mr. Pickering, hoping to stop their violence, read his licence; but this had no effect. The curate seized him: and he, without resistance, suffered himself to be led out of the house to the stocks. But here the clergyman and his associates were too much overpowered by liquor to be able to complete their design; and Mr. Pickering quietly went home. The congregation had dispersed, amidst the insults of the drunken rabble: and the whole village was in an uproar. The bells of the church were rung, a drum was beat about the streets, hand-bells were jingled in the ears of the baptists, dirt was thrown their faces, and a bucket of blood was brought from a butcher's shop, to throw over them. Mr. Pickering, however, took an opportunity of acquainting the bishop of the diocese with the disgraceful conduct of the curate: and was assured, that he should receive a severe reprimand. [One of the rabble, who rung the hand-bell and used every means to provoke some of the baptists to fight him, having continued in a state of drunken rage for several days, on crossing the ferry, while he was abusing his fellow passengers, fell out of the ferry boat and was drowned. *G. B. Mag.* Vol. II. p. 56.]

Driven thus from Sawley, they turned their attention to Dale-Moor, where they introduced preaching with such success, that it soon became necessary to build a meeting-house. They, accordingly, erected one, at Little Hallam, in that neighbourhood; and, about the same time, opened several dwelling-houses, in different neighbouring villages, for public worship. This alarmed their enemies, who were persons of rank and influence: and when the baptists made application, at the quarter sessions, to register the places of worship, and for a preacher to take the oaths according to the Act of Toleration, the magistrates positively refused their request. They then applied to the bishop, who instantly gave them an order under his own hand, to the registrarius of Litchfield, to make the entries, and grant them proper certificates: but that officer, probably influenced by the magistrates, refused to obey his lordship's injunctions.

The baptists were thus left, unprotected by the law, to the rage of the rabble; the insolence of which was heightened by the encouragement of their superiors. In this perplexity, they

wrote for advice to Mr. Gilbert Boyce, a messenger of the baptized churches in Lincolnshire. He informed them of the existence of a society, in London, for the protection of the civil rights of dissenters; and advised them to lay their cause before it. They, accordingly, applied to the secretary of that society; but he seemed to discourage their application. But, having obtained the address of the Chairman, Jasper Mauditt, esq. they ventured to direct a letter to him; to which an answer was quickly received, through the secretary; directing them to acquaint some respectable, country attorney with the circumstances of the case, and to correspond with the committee of the London society, and act according, to their instructions. They selected Mr. Foxcraft, of Nottingham, as their agent : and he received directions from the committee to make a regular application, at the next quarter sessions, in behalf of four meeting-houses and one minister. This he did: but his application was rejected with contempt. He sent an account of his ill success to London; and the committee immediately moved the court of King's-Bench, for a mandamus: which they readily obtained, and forwarded. to Nottingham. At the next quarter sessions for the county of Derby, Mr. Foxcraft produced this mandamus, from the Lord Chief Justice, requiring, in the most authoritative language, the Derbyshire justices to register the four places, and the preacher; and to give the parties legal certificates of the fact. The reading of this order struck the whole bench of magistrates with astonishment: as the chairman had publicly declared, that he would sooner resign his office than consent to the wishes of the baptists; and his colleagues had boldly expressed their approbation of his resolution. The hour of trial had now arrived: but, though mortification, disappointment and rage were visible in every countenance, neither the chairman nor his associates were willing to sacrifice their honours to their consistency. They submissively complied with the commands of their superiors; and the baptists, at length, were placed under the protection of the laws of their country. This struggle cost the churches fifty pounds: but they gladly raised it; and rejoiced at the happy termination of a contest with men formidable by their office and power.

We have no farther account of Kegworth church till the formation of the New Connection, in 1770; when it consisted of two pastors, three ruling elders, six deacons, and one hundred and eighty members. Religion was then very prosperous, and more than twenty candidates were waiting for baptism.

The church at Loughborough consisted, at the time of separation, of only fifteen members, who were scattered over Quorndon, Leake, Wymeswold, and many other adjacent villages. Messrs. J. Grimley and Joseph Donisthorpe were ordained joint pastors over this society; and served it with zeal and diligence. Though they resided at the distance of nine miles from Loughborough, and fourteen from Leake, yet no obstacle could stop them in the pursuit of their great object, or prevent them. from attending, at the appointed time and place on every season of public worship. Their efforts were owned, by the great Head of the church: and produced the desired effects. In 1764, the building, fitted up by Mr. Oldershaw, became too small for the increasing congregation; and it was enlarged to nearly twice its former dimensions. The expence was one hundred and sixty pounds; and was cheerfully defrayed by the free-will offerings of the hearers. About this period, Mr. Grimley removed to Loughborough, and devoted himself entirely to the work of the ministry: and, in two years afterwards, Mr. Donisthorpe also settled at the same

place; but continued his business, and was thus enabled to preach the gospel without pecuniary recompence. In 1766, preaching was introduced into Quorndon, a village three miles south of Loughborough: Mr. Robert Parkinson, who resided there, licensing his house for the purpose. Success crowned the attempt: and, in 1770, a neat, plain meeting-house was erected at Quorndon, which cost two hundred and seventy pounds.

Such, indeed, was the astonishing progress of the gospel, that this church, which, in 1760, consisted of only fifteen members, had, in 1770, increased to upwards of two hundred and forty; besides upwards of thirty candidates, who were waiting for admission into their fellowship. It had then two pastors, one ruling elder, and five deacons: and the hearers were numerous. Well might they state to the Association, that religion was prosperous!-- Perhaps this prosperity arose, in some degree, from the peculiar fitness of the joint pastors to co-operate in their sacred work. Mr. Donisthorpe arrested the attention of the careless sinner, and laid a solid foundation; on which Mr. Grimley, by regulating the affairs of the church, and the practice and principles of its members, raised an useful superstructure. The one planted, and the other watered; and the great Head of the church crowned their united labours with abundant success.

The small interest, at Kirby-Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, formed the fifth part of the original division. Mr. Abraham Booth, who had for several years laboured at that place, took the oversight of this society, in 1760, though he was never ordained over it. His character was highly respected, and the people were much attracted to him. But, in a few years, a change took place in his sentiments; which, after much deliberation, caused him to leave the general baptists, probably about the year 1765. He carried with him a warm esteem for the friends from whom he had separated, which he retained through the whole of his life; and which they as cordially returned. He was afterwards, for thirty-seven years, the highly respected and useful pastor of the particular baptist church in Little Prescott-street, London; and died in 1806. We have no further account of the society at Kirby-Woodhouse till 1774; when it consisted of only twenty-four members.

Thus we have seen the small society formed at Barton, in 1745, which, at its commencement, consisted of only seven members, gradually extending its limits and increasing its numbers, till, in 1770, it had become six respectable churches, which contained more than nine hundred and fifty members; and were served by ten ordained pastors, seven ruling elders, and twenty-four deacons; and spread over a considerable part of the counties of Leicester, Warwick, Derby and Nottingham. [*G. B. Mag.* Vol. I. p. 355. Vol. II. pp. 54-58. 150-152.--*G.B. R.* Vol. I. p. 52. Vol. pp. 3,4. 120-125.--*J.T. Mss.*--Minutes of Annual Association of New Connection, 1770, and Private Information.]--Let us pause here, and examine, as concisely as possible, the character, opinions, and discipline of these successful dissenters.

SECT. 5.--Observations on the Character--Mode of Preaching--Discipline--and Doctrines of the General Baptists in the Midland Counties, previous to the Formation of the New Connection.

When we reflect, that these zealous men were, generally, very illiterate--that they had no acquaintance with any other dissenters--and that, when they became seriously concerned to do the will of the Lord, they had every thing, to learn, we cannot expect much

systematic regularity, either in their principles or practices. Their early notions would, necessarily, be undigested and often incorrect: and it would not be till a lapse of years had enabled them to examine and mature their first ideas, that they could form a consistent scheme of doctrine and discipline.

Their progress in knowledge was also retarded, by a prejudice which too many of them entertained against the use of human compositions in the search for divine truth. So great was this prejudice, at one time, that when their more studious ministers had recourse to the works of some learned men, they thought it prudent to conceal their acquaintance with those authors from their hearers. [Mr. Grimley had studied Watt's Logic seven years, before his friends knew that he possessed such a book. G. B. Rep. Vol. I. p. 50.] This unhappy dislike might arise, in part, from the ignorance and wickedness of the neighbouring clergy; who, it is probable, were the only learned men with whom they had much acquaintance: but it doubtless sprung from a more laudable source--their high opinion of the Bible, and their full persuasion that it contained all that was necessary for them to know in religious concerns. Yet as they had every thing to discover and investigate, by their own study of the sacred oracles, their progress would be slow and irregular though the final results might be less tainted with human alloy, than if they had availed themselves of the assistance of commentators or divines. It would not, therefore, perhaps, be useful, had we the means, to describe the various tenets or practices which they successively adopted and relinquished: it may suffice, to make a few general remarks on their character and sentiments.

The most striking feature in the character of these professors, both private members and ministers, was an earnestness in their religious pursuits, of which there are, at present, too few Instances. They evidently esteemed religion as the most important object of their attention; and, therefore, engaged in it with all their might. Deeply sensible of the unspeakable value of immortal souls, and strongly affected with the wonderful plan for the recovery of a lost world, as exhibited in the gospel, they suffered no considerations of prudence, ease or interest to relax their exertions or abate their ardour, in working out their own salvation, and promoting the salvation of their neighbours.

The private members evinced the truth of this observation, by the eagerness with which they seized every opportunity of attending the means of grace themselves, and of inducing others to accompany them. They regularly walked ten, fifteen, and sometimes twenty miles, to hear a sermon, or enjoy the ordinances of the gospel. Often, after a day of labour in their secular business, they would go eight miles to an evening meeting, and return after midnight to their habitations; even when they have been obliged to rise early the next morning to resume their daily toil, And this was not submitted to as a burden, or performed merely as a duty; it was undertaken with alacrity, and enjoyed as a privilege.--Nor were they less anxious to promote the eternal interests of others. Nothing afforded them more pleasure, than to be made an instrument of waking a sinner to flee from the wrath to come. They would spare neither pains nor time to instruct, encourage and assist one who was turning his face towards Zion.

The noble exertions which they made, in building places of worship, afforded the strongest proof of their zeal to spread the gospel. We have seen, in the foregoing pages, meeting-houses rise, one after another, in quick succession: and have observed that, wherever there was a prospect of the conversion of sinners being promoted by the building one, means were found to effect it.--When we consider, that almost all these professors were labouring men--that they had to encounter the opposition, not to expect the aid, of their wealthy neighbours--and that they had no Connection to assist their exertions, and had not yet discovered the method of laying the nation under contribution, by sending travelling mendicants front one extremity of the kingdom to the other--we are ready to wonder how they were able to accomplish these expensive objects. But, when we contemplate the spirit by which they were actuated, our astonishment changes into admiration. When we see the poor labourer devoting a part of his weekly earnings towards erecting a house for God; and employing many hours, which ought to have been spent in repose, in labouring, at the good work--when we learn that, on some occasions, these poor people have sold part of their little household furniture, and even the women have disposed of their wedding rings, rather than suffer the building to be interrupted--when we are told, that Mr. F. Smith, who then worked at his trade as a journeyman, contributed regularly eight-pence per week, towards the erection of the meeting-house at Melbourn; and that receiving, at that juncture, a legacy of five pounds left him by his father, he joyfully devoted this his whole fortune towards completing the good work; and are assured that his associates acted on the same principles--we cease to wonder: every thing is possible to men like these. [This trait in their character is thus handsomely noticed by Mr. Thompson. "It ought to be mentioned, to the honour of this people, though generally poor and in low circumstances, (there being but few persons of property among them) that, stead of putting their neighbours under annual contributions, they have, with a zeal proportionable to their own sense of the importance of the gospel, at their own expence, erected several commodious buildings, for the comfortable carrying on of the worship of God, without being burdensome to any one. To their power, yea, some would think beyond their power, they were willing of themselves to do the most generous things for the sake of the gospel." J. T. MSS. 1774.]

But the most exemplary instances of disinterested zeal appeared, in the almost incredible exertions of the preachers. They were all labouring men, and had families dependant on their industry for daily support: yet they were instant in season and out of season; ready, at all times, to sacrifice their time, their repose, and even their property, to promote the cause in which they were engaged. They were, likewise, subject to heavy expences from the visits of their friends, on religious concerns, which were frequent, and not seldom of long continuance. The cause, also, had become so extended, that the travelling from place to place made an addition to their toll, of which few can form any adequate idea.

But an instance or two will convey more information on this interesting subject, than a long description.--Of Mr. F. Smith, of Melbourn, his biographer writes thus:

"For twenty years successively, he preached the gospel, without any recompence of a worldly nature, except a few small presents, in some of the latter of them, from a very small number of individuals. He frequently worked hard through the day; then walked

three, six, and sometimes ten miles, to preach in the evening; and returned home afterwards, in order to pursue his daily labour next morning. This he sometimes did, two, three, or four times in the week. On the Lord's-days, he had two or three times to preach, and generally to walk from then to thirty miles or more. Every other Friday night, he, for years, met the ministers in conference: and, as they could not afford to lose their time in the day, to transact their business, six o'clock in the evening was the appointed hour of meeting. It was my father's regular method to work hard till three o'clock in the afternoon; and then walk to Barton, the place of meeting, which is not less than fourteen miles from Melbourn. Seldom had they finished their till midnight; when he returned home: sometimes so fatigued with his journey and the want of sleep, that, as I have heard him declare, it required the exercise of considerable resolution to prevent him from lying down to rest on the cold earth. This he did, without the most distant expectation of any pecuniary recompence; and, indeed, without desiring any.-- [*G. B, Mag.* Vol. I. p, 356.]

Respecting another of these ministers, Mr. S. Deacon, the pastor of the church at Barton, we are informed, that, "During the early part of his ministry, his labour was almost incredible. On the Lord's-day, he frequently travelled from twenty to forty miles on foot, and preached twice, and often three times. He has repeatedly walked from Ratby to Melbourn, a distance of twenty miles, on the Lord's-day morning, and returned after evening service; not reaching his humble habitation till two or three o'clock the next morning: and this he has done, when he was obliged to go early to work the same morning as a labourer. In the week-days, also, he frequently walked, after a hard day's-work, to Barton, Hugglescote, or Hinkley, to give an exhortation, or to attend the affairs of the society. The nearest of these is eight miles from Ratby; and Hinkley eleven: and he seldom tarried all night. "This has been done, too, in winter, amidst rain, snow, and dangerous floods, through which he has often waded deeper than his knees, in the dark." [*G. B. Rep.* Vol. VII. p. 52.--This active man frequently supplied Kirby-Woodhouse, in Nottinghamshire, thirty-nine miles from his dwelling; and had four shillings allowed for his compensation. On the same terms, he visited Ashford, in Derbyshire, upwards of fifty miles from Ratby: once he walked to London and back, and travelled with equal economy. *Ibid.*]

The other ministers being actuated by corresponding views, and placed in churches equally large, were called to similar labours:--the particulars just detailed may, therefore, be considered as a fair specimen of the toils to which these zealous and disinterested friends of mankind subjected themselves, without either the expectation or desire of reward from men. Surely infidelity itself must admit, that they were not influenced by worldly motives; but really believed that the truths which they made such efforts to recommend, were essentially important to the welfare of their fellow men.

From persons in the circumstances in which these good men were placed, and destitute, as they generally were, of literary advantages, with neither disposition nor opportunity to acquire them, no finished harangues or display of oratory could be expected. They had one great object, which they constantly kept in view:--this was, to instruct ignorant sinners in the great plan of salvation, and to persuade them to embrace it. To this they directed all their efforts. Their hearers were chiefly persons unacquainted with divine

things; and, therefore, it was necessary frequently to repeat and enforce the same great truths. Whatever text they read, their discourses generally turned on two grand topics:-- the wretched and ruined state of man by nature, and the method of salvation by faith in Christ. This they called preaching the law and the gospel: and would have thought themselves culpable, had they delivered one sermon which did not explain these subjects. When a preacher, who was very popular and successful. among them, was advised, by some of his friends, to vary the subjects of his discourse, he replied, with earnestness, " Perhaps there may be a soul present, who has never till to-day heard the law and the gospel preached: and should I waste the precious season in things comparatively of small importance, and neglect to acquaint him with his danger, and the means of escape, the consequence may be dreadful." [G. B. Rep. Vol. I. p. 251.]

Yet we are not to conclude, because these were the principal subjects of every discourse, that the discourses were always the same. These grand and interesting truths were the constant and favourite subjects of their meditation: they studied the scriptures incessantly, with a view to understand and defend them; and their minds were thus stored with a great variety of texts, confirming and illustrating them. They had considered them in all their bearings, and were furnished with many apt comparisons, to assist in their explanation. Possibly some of their similies would be thought, by modern divines, below the dignity of the pulpit: but these honest men never troubled themselves with cautions of that nature. Their own souls were deeply affected with the truths which they recommended to others: they spake out of the abundance of the heart; and were ardently desirous that the hearts of their hearers should be affected like their own. This imparted an earnestness to their delivery, and an animation to their addresses, that reached the heart, and fixed the attention. And, though their harangues frequently lasted nearly two hours, yet the audience shewed no symptoms of weariness; but cheerfully walked miles to attend their labours. In short, they have been well described by those who knew them, as "most immethodical, but most spirited, popular, and successful preachers."

The individual character of these ministers certainly differed considerably. Some had stronger minds, and clearer conceptions than others: some were studious, and qualified to form plans; others active, and ready to execute them. Some were, by habit and disposition, sons of thunder; and others, sons of consolation. Some appeared to have been designed to break up the fallow ground, and sow the seed: while others were peculiarly fitted to shield the growing plant from injury guard it against noxious weeds, and conduct it to maturity. Indeed their various tempers and qualifications seem to have been well suited by the great Head of the church; from whom flow "diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," successfully to co-operate in the great work to which they were called.

As private characters, they were diligent in business, honourable in their transactions with men, and conscientious in the discharge of their relative duties. It might be supposed, that their engagements as ministers, and earnestness in the concerns of religion, would have tempted them to have paid less attention to their families. But the circumstances and characters of many of the descendants are a sufficient reply to this insinuation; and afford satisfactory evidence, that neither their present nor future interests were neglected by their parents. And if, in any unhappy instance, the offspring of these ministers have

degenerated from the piety of their ancestors, and sunk into less respectable, circumstances; it may, we presume, be generally traced to want of energy in their fathers, who, like good old Eli, had not vigour sufficient to restrain their sons from making themselves vile.

[The following testimony to the characters of these men, by a judicious writer, not connected with them, ought to be recorded.--"From the conversation I have had with some of their ministers, they appear to be persons of a very serious spirit, and a good understanding: and, sensible of the disadvantages which they lie under for want of a learned education, they are the more unwearied in searching the scriptures, and zealous in pursuing the great end of the christian ministry--the winning of souls to Christ, and to the love or Truth and goodness. They are thoroughly acquainted with the principles of religious liberty, and established in them: and have all heartily concurred in the late application to parliament for relief, in the affair of subscription to the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. Some of their letters, which I have received on that subject, do honour to the goodness of their hearts, and the soundness of their understandings." Thompson's MSS. 1774.]

It may be expected, that we describe the discipline of these people, when they formed but one body: but as that was only a preparatory state, it will not be necessary to enlarge.

[We have seen already, that the Leicestershire general baptists availed themselves of the right, then enjoyed by all dissenters, of solemnizing marriages among themselves. (Supra, p.22) The Marriage Covenant, used by them, differing considerably from the one used, on the same occasion, by the general baptists of the seventeenth century; (See Vol. I p. 450) and conveying a distinct idea of their mode of proceeding; we insert the instrument signed at the marriage of Mr. Francis Smith, of Melbourn.

"It having been publicly declared, in three several meetings of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters, called Independents, in their licensed meeting-house at Melbourn, in the county of Derby; that there is a marriage intended between Francis Smith, of the parish of Melbourn, and in the county of Derby, bachelor, and Elizabeth Toone, of the parish and county aforesaid, spinster: which publication being agreeable (not only to the just and holy law of God, but also) to the good and wholesome laws of the land; in order that every one concerned may have the opportunity of making all suitable enquiry for his satisfaction, and that nothing may be done clandestinely. And upon due enquiry and deliberate consideration thereof, by the said congregation, it is by them allowed, there appearing no reason for objection, they both appearing clear of all others, and having also free consent of all persons, whether relations or others.

Now these are to certify all whom it may concern, that for the accomplishing of their said marriage, they, the said Francis Smith and Elizabeth Toone, did, this twentieth day of August, one thousand seven hundred and fifty-three, appear in a public assembly of the aforesaid congregation and others, met together for that purpose, in their meeting-house aforesaid; and in a solemn manner, he, the said Francis Smith, standing up and taking the said Elizabeth Toone by the hand (she also standing up) did publicly declare as followeth,

viz. "Brethren and sisters, in the fear of the Lord, and in the presence of this assembly, whom I desire to be my witnesses, that I, Francis Smith, take this our dear sister Elizabeth Toone, to be my lawful wife; promising, through divine assistance, to be unto her a faithful and loving husband, till it shall please the Lord by death to separate us."

And then and there in the said Assembly, she, the said Elizabeth Toone, in like manner taking him the said Francis Smith by the hand, did likewise publicly declare as followeth, viz. "Brethren and sisters, in the fear of the Lord, and in the presence of this assembly, whom I desire to be my witnesses, that I, Elizabeth Toone, take this our dear brother Francis Smith to be my lawful husband, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto him a faithful and loving wife, till it shall please the Lord by death to separate us."

And the said Francis Smith and Elizabeth Toone, as a further confirmation thereof, and in testimony thereunto, did then and there set their hands and seals.

Francis Smith
Elizabeth Smith.

We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, (being present amongst others) at the solemnization of the above marriage and subscription, in the manner aforesaid, as witnesses thereunto, have also to these presents subscribed our names, the day and year above written.

Abraham Booth, Nathaniel Pickering, William Kendrick, Joseph Donisthorpe, &c. G.B. Mag. Vol. I. p. 453.]

In the constitution of their societies, they imitated, in a great measure, the methodists. When a few persons were awakened to a concern for salvation, in any place, they were formed into a society. To this society candidates were admitted, on probation, for six months, before they were considered as complete members of the union. The certificate of fellowship was a ticket, given to each candidate, which was changed every six months. If any thing transpired to the disadvantage of a member which could not be satisfactorily explained, he was excluded from their communion, by refusing him a ticket.--In order to defray the necessary expences, each member was required to make a monthly subscription, according to his ability: and two stewards were appointed to receive and apply these contributions. But, in order to preserve the peace of families, it was directed, that no wife, or husband, or child, whose partner or parent did not belong to the society, should give it any pecuniary support, without the consent of their connections. To carry these regulations into effect, a weekly meeting was held for prayer and exhortation and a monthly one, for transacting the pecuniary and temporal concerns of the society.

The supreme controul over all these societies, as long as they continued to act as one body, was placed in the weekly conference of the ministers; which, for some time, assembled always at Barton; and afterwards alternately at Barton and Hugglescote. At this meeting, the places at which the preachers were to labour on the ensuing Lord's-day were appointed--persons were invited to assist in the work of the ministry--rules were

made for the people, and laws enacted for the societies--and the general operations of the whole machine were directed. As long as Mr. Kendrick maintained his character with the people, he influenced these conferences at his will: the other ministers were little more than the executors of his arrangements, and the people had scarcely any share in the government.

[As a specimen of the lofty tone assumed by this synod, we insert the following extract from the preamble to a code of laws, which they enacted for regulating the society at Melbourn.--Having stated the advantages resulting from uniting together in societies, they proceed--"Therefore having met together at our church at Barton, and having the societies in our care, we there came to this resolution, to establish such rules among them with whom we are concerned, as appear to be to the glory of God and the good of souls. And we have proved, even to a demonstration, that if there be not very strict economy in such matters, our labours will be rendered useless and unprofitable.--Knowing these things, we expect that all who join themselves to us, or are already joined in our society, do consent to the following articles." *G. B. Mag*, Vol. I. p. 364.--It is most probable, that Mr. Kendrick's wish to lord it over the brethren caused this pontifical language to be adopted; and that the rest acquiesced, in deference to him. All the conduct of the other preachers demonstrates, that neither interest nor ambition influenced them but a sincere wish to promote the salvation of immortal souls.]

When he was excluded, a division of this body, ensued; and the private members obtained that ascendancy in the conduct of the concerns of the church, to which they are certainly entitled by the principles of the New Testament.

The doctrinal tenets of these professors were long in a state of regular improvement. When they were first awakened to attention to religious subjects, they were almost totally unacquainted with the truths of christianity: and it was only by a constant, and diligent perusal of the scriptures, that they gradually formed a system of faith. Yet there were some important doctrines, which they early embraced and steadily maintained: which formed, as it were, the foundation of their subsequent opinions. Such were, the ruined state of man by nature; and full and free justification by grace through faith. This, as we have seen, was the favourite and the constant subject of all their discourses. The universality of the redemption purchased by the death of Christ, appears also to have been early and zealously asserted. But it is needless to enlarge here, as their sentiments, on the most important points of doctrine, which had then attained a degree of maturity, will be fully explained when we come to state the principles on which the New Connection was formed. It will be sufficient, at present, to hint, that they then affirmed--the fall of man--the depravity of human nature--the perpetual obligation of the moral law--the divinity and humanity of Christ--the fulness, freeness and universality of the atonement made by his death--sanctification by the Holy Spirit--the necessity of regeneration and holiness--and believers' baptism. [*G.B. Mag*. Vol. I. pp. 326,356, 361,362, 401.--Vol. II. p. 20.--*G.B. Rep.* vol. I. pp. 53, 249-251.--J.T. MSS.--P.I.--Minutes of Ann. Ass. 1770.]

CHAP. II.

THE RISE OF THE GENERAL BAPTISTS IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT, AND THEIR PROGRESS, TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW CONNECTION.

SECT. I.--Mr. Dan Taylor begins to preach--forsakes the Methodists--settles at Wadsworth--turns Baptist--travels in quest of General Baptists, and is baptized.

The General Baptist' cause, in the northern district of the kingdom, commenced, in the year 1762, in the neighbourhood of Halifax, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. There *were* then but few professors in that town: a church of the old presbyterians, and a small independent interest, *being the only* dissenting societies that existed. The particular baptists were, indeed, attempting to gather a congregation; but, it was not till long after this period, that they succeeded in establishing a church. The methodists, also, had, for several years, maintained a small society in the town; and were actively employed, in its vicinity. With these, Mr. Dan Taylor, who was afterwards the instrument of founding the general baptist cause in those parts, had been, for some time, connected. He was then a young man, being born in 1738: but possessing good natural abilities and an intrepid temper, and being zealous in the cause of religion, he had, for more than a year, engaged in visiting the sick, and in leading prayer-meetings. In these exercises he was so acceptable, that he was urged to attempt to preach. He yielded to the wishes of his friends; and delivered his first sermon in a dwelling-house at Hipperholme, not far from Halifax, in Sept. 1761. His occasional labours were highly encouraged, by the leading men among the Yorkshire methodists; and they were very anxious that he should visit Mr. Wesley, and enter regularly into the ministry, as a travelling preacher. But he did not approve of many things in their order and discipline; and was not satisfied with their manner of explaining some points of doctrine which he thought of essential importance. He, therefore, declined forming any closer engagements: and towards the Midsummer of 1762, entirely broke all connection with them.

About the same time, four persons in the neighbourhood of Heptonstall, a village nine miles west of Halifax, left the methodists for nearly the same reasons which had induced Mr. Taylor to forsake them. Their names were John Slater, John Parker, William Crossley, and a female whose surname cannot be recovered. These seceders, knowing Mr. Taylor's state of mind, invited him to preach for them; with which he readily complied. He commenced his public labours, in connection with them, during the summer; and preached, for some months, in the open air, under a tree, at a place called The Nook, in the township of Wadsworth, about a mile from Heptonstall. Though the prospect was very discouraging, the country excessively wild, and the inhabitants very rough and unpolished, he determined, after a short trial, to make an attempt to introduce the gospel among them; and accordingly at Michaelmas, 1762, settled at Wadsworth.

But winter approaching, it became necessary to provide some more commodious place of worship: and they took a house, in Wadsworth-lanes, which they fitted up for preaching by taking up part of the chamber floor, and erecting a pulpit; so that the remaining part served as a gallery. They registered this house, under the Act of Toleration, and opened it, in the autumn of the same year. Mr. Taylor occupied it as a school during the week;

and, meeting with encouragement as a tutor, was greatly assisted in carrying forwards the cause of religion: his friends, though zealous and affectionate, not being in circumstances to contribute much to his support.

Though these young professors had left the methodists through dissatisfaction with their discipline and doctrine, yet they had not formed any system for themselves. They now found it necessary to determine upon some plan of church order, and some principles of doctrine, on which they could unite to support the cause of their Redeemer. Among other things that became the subject of enquiry, on this occasion, was baptism.

Mr. Taylor had occasionally paid some attention to this important branch of christian duty, in *the* previous years of his religious course; but he now seriously endeavoured to learn the will of his divine Master respecting, it. With this view, he read the scriptures carefully, and consulted the *best authors on both sides of the* controversy. The result was, a complete conviction, that believers' baptism by immersion was the appointment of Christ, and the practice of his apostles. John Slater, also, became decidedly of this opinion: and several other of the friends inclined to adopt it.

Mr. Taylor immediately resolved, without consulting with flesh and blood, to obey what he believed to be the command of his Saviour. He applied to several particular baptist ministers for baptism: but, though they expressed their firm persuasion of his real christianity, and even were well satisfied of his call to the ministry, yet they all declined to baptize him. They knew that he openly maintained, that the Lord Jesus tasted death for every man, and made a propitiation for the sins of the whole world: and this circumstance, in their judgment, rendered it improper for them to comply with his request. One of these ministers, however, kindly informed him of some baptists, at Boston, in Lincolnshire, under the pastoral care of a Mr. Thompson, who, as he believed, were nearly of Mr. Taylor's sentiments.

This appears to have been the first intimation that he received of the existence of any other general baptists besides himself and his few friends.

Though the distance was great, not less than one hundred and twenty miles, and many serious obstacles presented themselves, this ardent searcher after truth, who was not easily frightened, determined to visit Mr. Thompson: and his friend. J. Slater, with equal affection and zeal, resolved to accompany him. They accordingly set out, on foot, on the morning of Friday, February 11th, 1763; and travelled on till night overtook them; when they found themselves in a field surrounded with water, and unable to discover their way. Perceiving a hay-rick near, they took shelter under it: and, having commended themselves to the divine protection, in solemn prayer, they laid down and slept securely till the morning. They arose refreshed; and going forwards arrived, towards night, at a place about eight miles beyond Gamston in Nottinghamshire; where they stopt for some refreshment. Making inquiries here on the subject of their journey, they were agreeably surprized to learn, that there was a society of general baptists at Gamston, and that a deacon of that church dwelt in the village where they then were. To him they immediately went; and, informing him of the object of their journey, requested some

information respecting the church at Gamston: but he received them very coolly, gave short answers to their questions, and directed them to a neighbouring public-house.

The next morning, being the Lord's day, they returned to Gamston; and arrived at the meetinghouse just as the morning service was concluding. In the afternoon, Mr. Dossey preached; and, when he came down from the pulpit, the travellers introduced themselves to his notice. He entered into friendly conversation with them and invited them to his house. Here they spent the three following days; and had much discourse with Mr. Jeffries the pastor, and other principal members of the church. This gave them an opportunity of giving that minister full satisfaction respecting their character and views: and on the Wednesday, he baptized Mr. Taylor in the river, near Gamston. Mr. Slater declined being baptized, at the same time, out of affection for his fellow traveller; choosing to receive the ordinance from him, rather than from any other minister.

After their return to Wadsworth, Mr. Taylor resumed his great work of preaching the gospel, with increased zeal and success. He delivered several public discourses to explain and enforce believers' baptism; and stood ready to defend his principles against all opposers. In a short time, he baptized his friend Slater with several others: and a great degree of attention to the subject was excited throughout the country.

SECT. 2.--*The Wadsworth Friends join the Lincolnshire Association--unite as a Church--build a Meeting-house--prosper--institute Experience meetings.--Their State at the Commencement of the New Connection.*

During *his late excursion*, Mr. D. Taylor had learnt many particulars respecting the Lincolnshire general baptists, with whom the church at Gamston was connected. He was informed, that an union subsisted among the various societies of the same faith; that the representatives of these churches held annually an association to consult on the concerns of the cause at large; and, that, this meeting would be held at Lincoln, in May, 1763. As he stood alone in Yorkshire, he was anxious to form a connection with other ministers whose sentiments agreed with his own, and determined to attend this meeting. He accordingly went, and was kindly received. From this time, he was considered as a member of that association; and was employed by them on various public occasions. Here too he formed an intimacy with Mr. W. Thompson of Boston, which continued till that worthy christian was called to his reward.--His new friend invited him to make a short tour with him, in which he introduced him to Boston and various other churches in Lincolnshire.

Mr. Thompson accompanied Mr. Taylor to Wadsworth; where he baptized several persons and administered the Lord's supper: and fourteen of these professors united as a regular church. Mr. Taylor was soon after called to the pastoral office over this small society; but was not ordained till the autumn of 1763. On that occasion, Mr. Gilbert Boyce, a messenger of the baptized churches in Lincolnshire, and pastor of the general baptist church at Coningsby, and Mr. Dossey, assistant preacher at Gamston, were invited; when Mr. Boyce addressed the minister, from 1 Tim. 3:1.

Thus the first general baptist church in Yorkshire was formed and organized. The pastor and his friends exerted themselves to the utmost, both to promote the interest in their own society, and to carry the gospel into the dark villages around them. The blessing of God attended their labours; the hearers increased, and members were regularly added to the church. The house which they occupied as a place of worship, soon became too small to accommodate the congregation: and, in the following year, 1764, they were encouraged to build a meeting-house. This was erected on the side of a steep rocky declivity, fitly denominated a cliff, that formerly had been covered with the birch tree, and thence obtained the name of Birchcliff, which it afterwards gave to the church. Thus accommodated, the cause continued to prosper. Meetings for prayer and religious conversation were established, in various places of the neighbourhood: and several of the members began, to be very useful in conducting them. This year, also, Mr. Taylor attended the Lincolnshire association; and, after his return, took a journey in the midland counties, to collect for the meeting-house, just erected at Birchcliff.

During this excursion, he gained the first intelligence of the Leicestershire general baptists and had a short Interview with Mr. Hutchinson of Loughborough. Though this interview lasted scarcely half an hour, it afforded him great pleasure, and gave him a good opinion of those christians. He took every opportunity during the remainder of that journey, of enquiring respecting their principles and character: and the result was, a persuasion that they were friends to the fundamental truths of the gospel; and, as a body, respectable in their conduct. He was thus induced to cultivate an acquaintance with their ministers, and to introduce them to the notice of the Lincolnshire association. This he had an opportunity of doing at Midsummer, 1765, when he attended that association; and was deputed, as its representative, to the general assembly in London. He again went to the general assembly, in 1767, in the room of Mr. W. Thompson, who was appointed as the representative of the Lincolnshire association, but could not undertake the journey.

Mr. Taylor continued to labour diligently in his sacred work, and enjoyed an encouraging degree of success. Under the blessing of heaven on his exertions, an attention to religion was excited, which afterwards produced the happiest effects. His friends heartily seconded the endeavours of their pastor, by seizing every opportunity of inducing their neighbours to attend the preaching of the word, as well as by encouraging and directing such as appeared to be the subjects of serious impressions. With this view, each member of the church made it a point of duty to endeavour to bring one careless sinner under the sound of the gospel, and to use every scriptural method to engage him to embrace it. And when this happy end had, in one instance, been attained, and the object of his cares had enrolled himself among the followers of Christ; he looked about again for another wandering sheep, that he might endeavour to bring him also into the fold of the church.

It was during the period of which we are treating, that the Birchcliff church adopted a practice, in which they have been imitated by most of the general baptist societies that have since been formed in Yorkshire:--the holding of *Experience Meetings*, as they are usually styled. The members of this church, previous to the formation of the New Connection, were divided into five parts, according to the proximity of their habitations; and to each of these divisions, a person, who was judged qualified by his piety and

experience, was appointed, as a leader. The members included in each part met weekly, at one of their houses; and any of their neighbours, who desired to engage in the cause of Christ, and wished to obtain religious knowledge, was also encouraged to attend. The meetings generally commenced with singing and prayer. When this exercise was concluded, the company all sat down; and the leader declared, in a few words, the state of his own mind, as to the concerns of religion, since the last opportunity; his trials and supports, his hopes and his fears, his struggles against inward and outward enemies, and his advancement or decline in the christian course. When, he had said what he esteemed proper and necessary respecting himself, he requested each of the friends present, in rotation as they were seated, to give a similar statement of his experience; and made such observations, and offered such advice and cautions, as the circumstances of each might seem to require. After he had gone round, the meeting closed with prayer and thanks suitable to the particulars which had transpired.--The leaders of these divisions met together every six weeks, for mutual communication and assistance. At this leaders' meeting, as it was called, the minister always was requested to be present: when he was not a leader. [The Yorkshire churches do not pretend, that experience meetings are expressly commanded in the New Testament; but suppose that they may be included in the general canon, "Let all things be done unto edifying." They wish not therefore, to censure those who disapprove of them. "I am sure," says one of their aged ministers, "that these meetings are right; but I am equally sure that I have no right to command my fellow christians to attend such meetings. I am extremely certain, that such meetings, if properly conducted, are very useful; but I am as perfectly persuaded, that there are many valuable christians, both ministers and others, who may not approve of them, and who never attend them. I wish to be among the first in shewing perfect friendship to those who think and act differently from me."--J. T's Memoirs of his own Life.]

The Birchcliff church, likewise, at this time, held meetings for discipline every six weeks; "at which they made it a rule for all the members to attend:" and, once a quarter, a sermon was preached to the members only, on some peculiar points of discipline.

The pastor and his people thus striving together, the cause prospered in their hands: and additions to their society were frequent. At the commencement of the New Connection, in 1770, this church consisted of sixty-nine members, their public services were well attended, many appeared to be awakened, and religion seemed to flourish. [G. B. Rep, Vol. II. 276. Min. of Lincolnshire Association, 1764, 1765, 1767. Min. of Ann. Asso. 1770, and Private Information.]

The discipline exercised in this church, during the interval which has just passed under our review, was on the principles of independency. But it may be easily supposed, that, though they were in a state of progressive improvement, they could not, in the short space of seven years, have matured a very perfect system. As far as they understood the will of the great Head of the church, they endeavoured to regulate the concerns of their society, according to his precepts and to call no man master on earth. The same remark applies to their doctrinal sentiments. But it is unnecessary to pursue the subject at present, as we shall have a more proper

occasion to enlarge on these topics, when we come to state the principles on which the New Connection was formed.

CHAP. III.

THE HISTORY, FROM THE CLOSE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW CONNECTION. OF THOSE CHURCHES WHICH, THOUGH PREVIOUSLY UNITED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, WERE INCLUDED IN THE NEW CONNECTION, AT ITS FORMATION.

SECT.1.--The Proceedings of the General Baptist Church, now assembling in Church-lane, White-chapel, from the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century, to the Settlement of Mr. Randall over it.

Besides these churches in the midland and northern counties, of the rise of which we have given some account in the preceding pages, several ancient congregations of general baptists united in forming the New Connection. These were, the societies which assembled in Church-lane, Whitechapel--in the Park, Southwark--at Boston, and at Fleet, in Lincolnshire--and a few small churches in Kent and Essex. It will be proper to continue, from the close of the first volume, as distinctly as we can, the account of the congregations in London and Lincolnshire: but of the societies in Essex and Kent, which soon fell off from the union, a brief notice may be sufficient.

We have already seen that the society which now meets in Church-lane, Whitechapel, originally assembled on Tower-hill, under the care of Mr. S. Loveday; and that his successor, in the pastoral office, was Mr. J. Maulden; under whose ministry the church removed to Rupertstreet, Goodman's-fields, where we left it, at the close of our former volume, in a peaceful state.

The venerable John Maulden continued to preside over this society, with diligence and success, till about 1710, when he embraced the principles of the Sabbatarians. In consequence of this change in his sentiments, he left his former connection, and united with the church of Sabbatarian general baptists, which has now for more than a century assembled in Mill Yard. His character and abilities procured him a welcome reception among his new friends, by whom he was soon chosen to the office of joint pastor with Mr. Savage. He did not long retain that situation, as he was carried away by death in February, 1714; at the advanced age of seventy years. [We have not seen any record of the exact date of Mr. Maulden's leaving the church in Goodman's-fields. He was pastor of it in December 1709; though it appears that he had embraced the Sabbatarian principles before 1708. In 1712, the church was under the pastoral care of Lewis Douglas. W.A.C.B. 1709 and 1712.--Maulden's Threefold Dialogue, 1708.]

Mr. Maulden, during the twenty-six years of his connection with this church, appears to have been an honourable christian, and a respectable and useful minister. He published three pieces: 1. "The Pious Young Man's Guide:" a compendious and useful catechism, in the form of a conversation between a father and his son. 2. "A Threefold Dialogue:" on

free grace, baptism, and the sabbath. 3. "Imperfections discovered:" in which he laments the little concern which professors display for real vital religion, and their heats and divisions concerning points of less importance. [Crosby, Vol. III. p. 132.]

Mr. John Maulden, probably a son of this minister, was for many years a worthy and active member of this church. Though he was never called to the pastoral office, yet he frequently preached for that society: and as they solicited his service on various public occasions, it is probable that his labours were well approved, both by his friends; and the public. [Church Lane Records, from 1720 to 1744.--Though Mr. D'Assigny calls the father "'a Shoe-maker;" yet the son appears to have been a man of property.]

After Mr. Maulden had left the church in Goodman's-fields, Mr. Lewis Douglas was called to the pastoral office over it. We have not the exact date of his ordination, but it was previous to 1712. In that year, this church removed to a meeting-house in Virginia-street, Ratcliff-highway, which had become vacant by the dissolution of the church that had long occupied it, under the care of Mr. Isaac Lamb. [The church under Mr. Isaac Lamb has generally been classed with the particular baptists; but the following facts render the case doubtful.--Mr. Isaac Lamb was the son of Mr. Thomas Lamb, of Bell-alley, a zealous general baptist.--The society of which Mr. I. Lamb was pastor was reckoned as a sister church by the general baptist churches in London; and members were recommended from it to them, and from them to it, as usual among churches of the same faith.--When Mr. I. Lamb's church dissolved, most of the members went in and joined the general baptist church in Paul's-alley: and Mr. H. Burroughs, who had been a deacon in the former society, was admitted to the same office in the latter. His son, Joseph Burroughs, was, for forty-four years, the pastor of the church in Paul's alley. [W.A.C.B. 1688, 1695.--Crosby. Vol. III. p. 101.--Wilson, Vol. III. pp. 231, 249.]

What induced Mr. Douglas and his friends to leave a place of worship which they had so recently built, cannot now be ascertained; as the records of that society which remain, are in a very mutilated state, and commence only in 1720.

There appears to have been, about this time, another church of general baptists, in Goodman'-fields; which was successively under the care of Mr. Jemmett Mr. Beacham; but no other particulars are known of this society. It is probable, that it joined the church of which we are treating; as members of the names of Jemmett and Beacham are frequently mentioned in its records. [W, A. C. B. 1696 and 1702.]

In the year 1717, this church united with several other baptist churches, both particular and general, in rebuilding and enlarging the baptistery at Horslydown, for the general accommodation of their respective societies. The place was registered under the Act of Toleration, and vested in the hands of trustees chosen from the several congregations. This church subscribed its proportion, and elected one trustee. [Crosby, Vol. IV. p. 189.]

Lewis Douglas continued pastor of this church only a few years after its removal into Virginia street. His conduct soon became awfully inconsistent with his profession: and, after much trouble and disgrace, he was excluded from the communion of the church,

Aug. 7, 1720. It appears that, for some time previous to that event he had forsaken his station, and wandered about the country. After this separation, we have no farther particulars of this unhappy man. [Ch. Lane Records, 1730.]

The church, being thus left destitute of a pastor, was much indebted to the zeal and discretion of a few leading members, who cheerfully stepped forwards to assist their brethren: Especially of Mr. Maulden, the son of their former pastor, who was very active and useful. Their first care was, to procure suitable supplies for carrying on the public worship of the congregation. They applied, for assistance, to the general baptist ministers in London; and, among others, engaged the services of the celebrated Dr. Gale, for one Lord's-day in every month. They also paid a laudable attention to the discipline of the society, during the vacancy in the pastoral office. The members, who appear at this time to have been numerous, were distributed, according to their places of abode, into the various districts of London and Southwark--Wapping--Whitechapel--and East Smithfield. Persons were frequently appointed to visit all the members in each of these districts, and to make a report to the church of their conduct, character, and circumstances.

Yet they still felt their need of a settled pastor, and kept that important object constantly in view. As a necessary preparation, they sought wisdom and direction from the Father of lights; and united in keeping June 1st. 1720, as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, "to implore the Divine assistance," and intreat God "to appear for them" in their destitute circumstances: and invited several neighbouring ministers to assist them in the services of the day. They next began to enquire for a proper person to fill the important station: and appear first to have corresponded with a minister of the name of John How; but as he did not agree with them in the maintaining the laying on of hands, as a foundation principle, this negotiation was soon closed.--Their attention was also directed to Mr., Joseph Morris, of Welton, in Northamptonshire; but he declined their overtures. At length, they applied to Mr. Matthew Randall, who was the elder with Mr. R. Drinkwaterr, over the general baptist church at Chichester. This minister's business calling him frequently to London, he had opportunities of occasionally supplying the Congregation ill Virginia-street: and his labours. were so acceptable, that they wrote to the church at Chichester to permit him to settle with them. That society, considering that it would promote the cause of the Redeemer, and probably render Mr. Randall both more useful and more comfortable, yielded to their request. But his connections in business prevented his immediate removal: and, for more than a year, he supplied them once a month, and administered the Lord's-supper. In the beginning of 1722, he removed to London, and assumed the regular oversight of this church. [Ch. Lane Records, 1720-1723.]

SECT. 2.--The proceedings of the Church now assembling in Church Lane, from the Settlement of Mr. Randall to the Formation of the New Connection.

In a few months after Mr. Randall had settled with the church in Virginia-street, the practice of singing, in public worship, was introduced. This was thought too great an innovation, to be made by the sanction of a common church-meeting: but a general visit to all the members being appointed, the messengers were directed to inquire the opinion of each individual on the subject. There appearing a considerable majority in favour of the proposition, and none who directly opposed it, the church agreed, Mar. 1722, to

introduce it, as soon as convenient. Yet they only ventured, at this time, to sing once in *each* service: it was not till 1729, that they began to sing after sermon.

Towards the close of the year 1722, this society elected four deacons; Solomon Ware, John Parsons, Samuel Cave, and Isaac Jemmett: and they were ordained to that office, May 21st. following. In the ensuing winter, a lecture was opened on the Lord's-day evening; in order more effectually to promote the prosperity of the cause.

In 1726, this church co-operated very essentially in the establishment of an institution, the beneficial effects of which *are felt* by the general baptists of the present day. This was the raising of a Fund, for the support of the baptist cause, by assisting in the maintenance of poor ministers, and the education of young preachers. The particular baptists had recently formed a similar plan, the benefits of which were confined to their own party. The general baptists, finding *themselves* thus excluded, determined to attempt to raise a Fund for the same purposes, on more liberal principles. They declared the object of their plan was to relieve all ministers "without distinction, as their exigencies require, who agree in the practice of baptizing by immersion, upon a profession of faith, and appear to be sober, pious, and faithful in the discharge of their work." This fund was proposed to be raised by voluntary contributions, collections, and annual subscriptions; and to be placed at the disposal of a board of managers chosen annually by the churches whose yearly collections amounted to five pounds, together with all private annual subscribers of the same sum. No distribution was to take place till the capital amounted to *five hundred pounds; and all additions that* should afterwards be made to the stock were declared to be inviolable:--no diminution of the capital whatever being permitted.

This excellent institution was warmly patronized by the churches, and a considerable sum was soon raised; to which the church in Virginia-street contributed liberally: and Mr. Thomas Shering, a respectable member of that society, was chosen the first treasurer. This Fund still exists, and distributes annually the sum of two hundred pounds, to the great relief of many poor and young ministers. During the first years of its operation, several particular baptists shared its favours: but, it is believed, that both its maintenance and support have been long confined to the general baptists of the Old and New Connections.

[The first proposition for the establishing of this Fund was made to the Paul's-alley church, July 25th. by Messrs. Joseph Burroughs and James Foster, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Foster who were then joint-pastors of that congregation and had drawn up the plan, in concert with several ministers and private gentlemen of other churches.--At its formation, it was proposed to educate young men for the ministry; and we transcribe the regulations respecting their admission, as a specimen of the good sense of the projectors. "When any persons shall be recommended to the society, in order to be encouraged as students;--before their admission, inquiry shall be made, by a committee the managers, with respect to their morals and piety, and as to their abilities and proficiency in learning: and such only shall be received, as have been baptized by immersion, upon profession of faith, and are members of some baptized church; and in whom it may be reasonably hoped that there is a real love to religion, as well as a good

disposition for literature."--Happy would it be for the christian world, if these rational principles were acted upon by all who superintend the education of ministers. In 1792, the original mode of appointing managers, through the change of circumstances, becoming inefficient, a meeting of the delegates from the congregations concerned in this institution was held: and it was agreed to place the concerns of the Fund in the hands of fifteen Managers, who should be chosen by the churches, and hold their situations for life.--Crosby. Vol. IV. p. 201.--Wilson, Vol. III. p. 251.--W.A.C.B. 1726, and P.I.]

Though religion was prosperous in this society, yet, the members of it observed, with deep concern, the rapid decline of the general baptist cause throughout the kingdom, which was too visible in the former part of the last century. In 1733, therefore, they proposed " to keep a day of fasting and prayer, in conjunction with the other congregations of the general faith, to bewail the declining state of religion, piety, zeal, and love among them." On this occasion, a collection was made, towards building a country meeting-house; and a plan was produced for building a meeting-house, every year, in some part of the nation, for the use of the general baptists. So anxious were they for the extension of what they esteemed the cause of truth.

The lease of the meeting-house in Virginia-street expiring, at Lady-day 1741, this church, after several unsuccessful attempts to renew it, were compelled to look out for another situation. They agreed with the sabbatarian society in Mill Yard, for the use of their meeting-house on the Lord's-day, at a yearly rent of ten pounds; and assembled, in that place, for the first time, on the Lord's-day in May, 1741.

For several succeeding years, this society appears to have been tranquil and united, and the cause of religion prospered. Many respectable persons were members of it, who very generously assisted the church, by frequent donations to the poor, as well as gifts and legacies to the church. Two worthy benefactors deserve notice. Mrs. Berril, a benevolent lady, to whom, during her life, the poor were much indebted, at her death bequeathed to the church the lease of a house in Pennington-street:--and Mr. Thomas Shering, an opulent and worthy gentleman, who was long actively employed in prosecuting schemes of usefulness, and in serving the congregation and the public, towards the close of his life, endowed the church with an estate in Spitalfields. Both these endowments have long since ceased, in consequence of the expiration of the leases by which they were held.

Mr. Randall continued to labour daily and acceptably among this people till Aug. 5th. 1756, when death removed him from his station. He was a man of good abilities, and a cultivated mind. During his long labours in the ministry, in which he was employed nearly fifty years, he experienced considerable trials. He appears to have been unhappy in his domestic connections and suffered much, during the first years of his residence in London, from the tongue of calumny. His steady and honourable conduct stopped the mouth of gainsayers; and procured him, as he advanced in life, increasing respect and friendship.

The church at Chichester, by which he was first called to the ministry, and the excellent Mr. Drinkwater, with whom he was co-pastor for several years, retained the greatest

esteem for him: and, on the death of his former named colleague, in 1743, invited him from London to preach his funeral sermon. The estimation in which he was held by the elders and churches of his own denomination, was evinced by the general assembly, which, in 1747, invited him to accept the office of messenger. Mr. Randall published his sermon on the death of Mr. Drinkwater, under the title of "The exalted Hopes of the Righteous, at, and after death, considered:" from Prov. 14:32. He was, also, the author of "Reflections on the Duty of Masters, Mistresses, and Servants: in which several Irregularities are reproved, and certain plain and useful Rules proposed, for promoting the Peace and Tranquility of Families." This piece appears to have been well received, and soon came to a second edition.

After the death of Mr. Randall, the church was occasionally supplied by Mr. John Brittain, a member of the general baptist church, under Mr. S. Fry, in Horslydown; who had, for a few years, been employed, under the sanction of that society, as an itinerant preacher about Nine Elms and Battersea. His temper being fearless, and his manner animated, he acquired a considerable degree of popularity; though his mind had received little improvement from literature. His occasional labours were so well approved by the congregation in Mill Yard, that they gave him an invitation to take the oversight *of them*: to which he consented. He was ordained to the pastoral office, Dec. 16th. 1756, by Messrs. Robert Pyall, Thomas Harrison, Samuel Fry, and Jonathan Brown. At the same time, William Hill was ordained deacon.

The congregation, feeling the inconvenience of assembling in a place which belonged to another church, grew desirous of possessing a meeting-house of their own. In the beginning of 1760, they opened a subscription towards a fund for that purpose. They soon found a commodious situation, in Church-lane, Whitechapel, which they secured; and, March 26th. 1761, a committee was appointed, to oversee the building of a new meeting-house.

It was not finished, however, till two years afterwards: and the first church-meeting was held in it, Mar. 23rd. 1763.

In 1769, Messrs. Williams, Brown, Willmott, and Preston were chosen deacons; and ordained, June 17th. by Messrs. Sexton, Brittain, Brown, and Hitchman. Two years afterwards, Mr. Brittain was seriously indisposed; which gave his people an opportunity of shewing their respect and affection for their pastor by holding a prayer meeting, to implore Almighty "to spare him for his glory, and the further benefit of his church." This society appears, at this time, to have been zealously engaged in promoting the cause of their Saviour; especially in discovering and cultivating ministerial gifts. For this purpose, two young men were appointed as readers; whose office it was, to read a portion of the scriptures at the commencement of public worship. A meeting was held every Lord's-day morning, and one in the evening each week, for the improvement of gifts: and a lecture was maintained on the Lord's-day evenings, by Mr. Brittain, and several young preachers. These efforts were blessed by the great Head of the church. Several young ministers were raised up, and numbers were added to their fellowship. In June 1770, when, the New Connection was formed, this society consisted of about three hundred members, one

pastor, seven deacons, and one young minister. [Ch. Lane Records. Min. of Ass. N.C. W.A.C.B. Randall's Sermon, p. 9.]

SECT. 3. --Notices of the Church now assembling in Great Suffolk-street, from, the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century to the Formation of the New Connection: with a brief Account of the Churches in Kent and Essex which united in forming that Connection.

The other church in London, which united in forming the New Connection, was the society in the Park, Southwark, that now assembles in Great Suffolk-street. It was, as we have already seen, a branch of the general baptist church at Dockhead; and formed, a separate interest in 1764. Its first pastor, William Marnor, was succeeded by Mr. William Brown, who was the elder at the close of the seventeenth century. [See Vol. I. pp. 264, 265, 335, 336.]. pp. 264, 265, 335, 336.]

Mr. Brown attended the general Assembly, as the elder of this church, in 1704; and, probably, died soon after that date: as we find his successor, Mr. John Tayler, settled with this people in the commencement of 1707. No particulars remain of Mr. Taylor, except that he attended the general Assembly regularly, as the pastor of this congregation, from 1710 to 1715; and was, probably, the author of a piece, entitled, "An Examination of Stokes' Argument in Favour of Sprinkling." We are equally unacquainted with the affairs of the church during his ministry.--Feb. 10th. 1714, three neighbouring general baptist societies joined with this church in keeping a day of fasting and prayer at the Park meeting-house.

Mr. Joseph Jenkins, a minister then of some note among the general baptists, succeeded Mr. Taylor. He was called out as a preacher, in 1693, by the church in White's-alley, of which he was an esteemed member; and laboured among them till 1702, when he settled with the congregation in Hart-street, Covent Garden. In 1709, he removed to the general baptist church at High Hall, which had been under the care of Doctor William Russell, of controversial memory. After labouring in this station for seven years, he accepted an invitation, in 1716, to become the pastor of the society in the Park; and was followed thither by many of his hearers from High Hall. The infirmities of age obliged him to resign the pastoral office, about the year 1731; but he continued a member of this society till his death; the precise period of which is not known. He was living in 1736, in low outward circumstances. Mr. Jenkins was much esteemed among the churches as a preacher, and frequently employed on public occasions. He published several "Funeral Sermons"--"a Discourse on Brotherly Love"--"The Riches of Divine Grace in the accepting of great Sinners on their return to him;" and revised and re-published Doctor Griiffith's "God's Oracles and Christ's Doctrine." During the eldership of Mr. Jenkins, there were two occasional preachers in the Park church, Mr. William Grove and Mr. William Sturch; but no particulars respecting them have come under our notice, except that the latter died in 1728.

In 1731, Mr. George Coventry took the oversight of this church; but was removed before the close of that year. Though this minister appears have been in narrow circumstances, yet the family was respectable; as they had a large tomb in the burying-ground belonging to the Park meeting-house. Mr. George Mulliner the son of Mr. Abraham Mulliner, the

worthy pastor of the general baptist church in White's-alley, succeeded Mr. Coventry; and presided over this society till 1740. He was succeeded by a Mr. S. Hands, who had been a minister at Coventry. His stay was short; and was terminated in 1744; but whether by death or removal, is, with respect to him, as well as his two predecessors, uncertain.

Mr. Hands' successor was Mr. John Treacher, from Berkhamstead. This venerable minister was baptized, when only twenty years of age, by of the church at Chesbam; and, in less than two years, was called to the ministry. His labours were made very useful, and he was highly esteemed by his friends, whom he continued to serve as preacher till 1745; when he accepted a call to the pastoral office from the church in the Park. Over this society he presided, with great diligence and approbation, till his death, April 12th. 1756, in the seventy-fifth year of his age. His neighbour, Mr. S. Fry, of Fair-street, Horslydown, preached his funeral sermon, from 2 Thes. 2:16, which he afterwards published. He gives this pleasing account of *the* character of Mr. J. Treacher. "It was always his care to be an ornament to the religion he professed; and to inculcate it by an inoffensive and exemplary conduct.. The more conspicuous virtues of his life, were, his unaffected humility and patience under the difficulties and afflictions of life, demeaning himself with cheerfulness and resignation. His quiet, peaceable, forbearing disposition shone in a most resplendent light, throughout his whole conduct: which, as it in some measure qualified him for it, so it occasioned his being called to the good office of arbitration, both in the church and amongst his other friends and acquaintances: in which difficult task he was generally successful. And as he was of a meek and quiet spirit, so he enjoyed quietness, composure, and serenity of mind, even to his last moments. As a minister of the gospel, he flourished therein: bringing forth acceptable fruit to a good old age. And when confined to his bed nearly four months, and oftentimes attended with acute pain, his discourse of his supports and comforts was very entertaining to those about him. He was blessed with an humble, but firm and unshaken persuasion of the divine approbation through the mercy of God, and the mediation of Jesus Christ; often using the words of the text, 'a good hope through grace' His affectionate regard for his children, and their offspring, led him frequently to put up ejaculatory petitions for them, particularly that they might highly prize the means of grace, and suitably improve them."

Mr. Bn. Treacher supplied, for a few months, the place of his worthy father, whose character we have just transcribed; but soon left this society, to take the oversight of the church in Glasshouseyard. On his departure, Mr. Alexander Dobson was called to the pastoral office over the Park church; and continued his connection with it till his death, in 1767. It is probable, that the cause prospered in his hands, as the meeting-house in Duke-street was, during his ministry, rebuilt.

After the death of Mr. Dobson, this congregation was occasionally supplied by Mr. W. Summers, a member and deacon of the society in Church-lane, Whitechapel.. He had been called to the ministry in 1760: and his labours were so approved by the friends at the Park, that they invited him to be their pastor. With this invitation, he complied, and settled amongst them in 1768.

These are all the notices which we have been able to collect, respecting this society, during the period now under review. At the commencement of the New Connection, in 1770, it consisted of one pastor, two deacons, and fifty-three members: and religion appeared to be reviving.

Though most of the general baptists in Kent adhered to the ancient Assembly, yet the churches at Eythorn, Deal and Besell's Green united in the formation of the New Connection. The early history of these societies, as far as we have been able to trace it, has been detailed in the former volume: and, as their union with their new friends was only temporary, it would not be necessary, had we the requisite documents, to continue a regular account of their transactions through the succeeding years: we shall, therefore, only glance at the state of each in 1770.

The church at Eythorn, venerable for its antiquity, had been for nearly two centuries under the care of pastors of one family, and all of the name of John Knott. [Vol. I. pp. 281, 282.]

In 1770, John Knott, who had then the oversight of it, assisted at the formation of the New Connection: and his church, at that period, was composed of one pastor, two deacons, and thirty-three members. There was an appearance of increasing zeal amongst them, and a growing taste for experimental religion; and they were peaceable and affectionate.

The church at Deal was a branch of the church at Dover. [Vol. I. p. 278.] It had sunk low; but appeared to be reviving. At the commencement of the New Connection, it was supplied by Mr. James Fenn, and consisted of only twenty-one members, although there was a great number of hearers.

Mr. John Stanger, the pastor of the ancient general baptist church at Bessell's Green assisted also at the formation of the New Connection. This church had been founded, during the civil wars, by the apostolic William Jeffery; and had been a numerous and flourishing Society, from which many other respectable congregations had derived their origin. [Vol. I. pp. 108, 280, 361.] It had, however, shared in the general decline, and was now reduced to forty-five members.

These Kentish congregations were joined, on the same occasion, by several small churches in Essex; probably the remains of more flourishing societies which had formerly existed in that county. We have seen that, in 1646 Mr. S. Oates itinerated in these parts; and baptized numbers on a profession of faith. [Vol. I. pp. 116, 117.] This, probably laid the foundation of the general baptist cause in Essex, where we meet with several regular churches of that denomination, during *the* Protectorate. At the close of the seventeenth century, also, we have traces of respectable and zealous societies of the "general faith," in the same parts. [Ibid. p. 356, Note.] It is highly probable that they partook of the declension which, towards the middle of the last century, depressed the whole denomination: but, as we have not been able to obtain any regular account of their proceedings, we can only record their own report of their state, in 1770.

The church at Halsted, under the pastoral care of Mr. David Wilkin, consisted, at that time, of forty-three members. Their public worship was well attended, and religion appeared to be reviving. Mr. Charles Parman laboured amongst a small society at Castle-Headingham, which then comprised only twenty members; and at Coggeshall, Mr. Robert French served a church of no more than eighteen members. It is almost needless to add that, in both these places, they complain of religion being in a low state. The societies at Braintree and Sudbury also united with the former on this occasion; though they did not send any representatives to the first association: the first consisted of twenty five members, under a minister whose name is not recorded; and the latter was composed of only twelve members, and had neither minister nor deacon. [Min. of Ass. of New Con. 1770.]

SECT. 4.--A concise View of the Affairs of the Lincolnshire General Baptists, from the Close of the Seventeenth Century to the Formation of the New Connection.

Before we attempt to trace the history of those, churches in Lincolnshire which united in forming the New Connection, it may be both useful and interesting to take a rapid glance at the proceedings of the whole body of general baptists, in that part of the kingdom, from the close of our former volume to the commencement of that union.

When Mr. Hooke returned from the general assembly, in 1704, with the "Unity of the Churches," he was very desirous that the congregations under his superintendence should agree to the principles and regulations which it contained. Having been a party in negotiating and concluding that treaty of peace, he availed himself of the authority which his office gave him, to urge its adoption so much vigour as to disgust many of his brethren. The church at Boston preferred a formal charge against him, at the association, for "maintaining an arbitrary power in the ministry, distinct from the church;" and many others blamed him for making articles of faith; drawn up by fallible men, of equal consequence with the oracles of truth. The dissatisfaction against him was much increased, in the following year, when he assisted in. composing the strange "Expedient," which forbade persons signing "the Unity of the Churches" to ask any questions respecting its meaning.

The discontent then arose to such a height, in Spalding church, as to cause a division.

Mr. Hooke, finding that the majority of his brethren disapproved of his conduct, declined attending at the Lincoln association. When that assembly met, Mar. 27th. 1707, it resolved "that *the* paper called 'the Unity of the Churches,' and the Expedient thereunto affixed, ought not to be received by any member of their churches:" and being informed that several brethren had rejected their elders for opposing that paper, the association decreed "that such conduct was highly to blame, and a great breach of gospel order." The next year, Messrs. ~Benjamin Grantham, J. Marharn, and J. Pollard, who seem to have been the leaders of the opposition, were required to bring forward their charges against Mr. Hooke and his friends, that they might be tried at the next association. But, as the persons accused refused to attend at that meeting, these matters were probably never brought to a hearing.

The association, apprehending that their opposition to the domineering spirit of Mr. Hooke, as they esteemed it, might be misrepresented as a disapprobation of his doctrinal sentiments, thought it prudent to declare, at the same meeting, "that they remained upon their ancient gospel faith. and principles; owned by their ancient brethren, and professed by themselves for many years past." But this declaration not having the desired effect, they found it necessary, two years afterwards, to publish a more explicit avowal of their sentiments, on those important points which then convulsed the whole body.

[The following was circulated on this occasion.--"We, the Elders and Brethren associated at Lincoln, May 9th, 1709--being informed, by several worthy brethren, that many, dissenting from our Association, have and do, with great industry, spread abroad, that we deny the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. This, therefore, is to satisfy all our christian brethren, that we do now, as we ever did, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, in both his natures--Solemnly declaring that we believe him to be truly God, of the same nature or substance as the Father; and that he is as truly man, of the same nature or substance as his mother: and so he is God-man, manifested in the flesh; and as such we own him, in the union of both his natures, to be our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Furthermore, it being reported, that there are some of our community that suppose that the Almighty God is in the shape or form of a man--this may satisfy all such, and other persons whatever, that, we know of none such persons amongst us, and that we absolutely abhor such an opinion; firmly believing that God is a spirit, infinite and incomprehensible." Signed, by Thomas Ulliyott and twenty two others.--As several alterations were made before the publication, we have corrected the printed copy by the minutes of the association, in which the original document is preserved.]

The congregations who adhered to the association, having no one in the messenger's office amongst them, considered their organization as incomplete. In March, 1707, they chose Mr. T. Ulliyott, elder of the church at Elsham, to that dignity; and directed that his ordination should take place in the next month. This being prevented by the dissensions which then distracted the churches, they renewed their election, in 1708; and he was ordained August 8th. As they could procure no messenger to assist at this solemnity, the association authorized six elders to undertake it.

For several succeeding years, the disputes between Mr. Hooke's friends and the association raged with increasing bitterness; and the latter appears to have connected itself more closely with the general assembly. The friends of peace, dreading the mischievous effects of these unhappy contests, made several ineffectual efforts to procure a reconciliation. At length, on March 4th. 1712, a meeting was effected, and mutual explanations were made. Mr. Hooke disclaimed all opinions contrary to the independency of the churches; acknowledged the authority of the scriptures, in opposition to articles of human composition; and expressed his sorrow for having been concerned in supporting the "Expedient" affixed to the Unity of the Churches; which he formally abjured, and promised to use his influence to procure its revocation from the general assembly. But, in the midst of these concessions, he could not refrain from making some severe reflections on the conduct of his opponents; and, especially, of the Church at Boston. Yet, as his

accusers had neglected to attend this conference, though regularly summoned, Mr. Hooke was declared "to stand clear in the messenger's office, as formerly." Mr. Ulliyott also, having cleared himself from suspicion of heresy, by assenting to the Confession of Faith, was confirmed in the same rank. This treaty of peace was signed by thirty-two ministers and brethren; and sanguine hopes of a lasting union and tranquility were entertained. But all these hopes quickly vanished. At the next association, August 5th. of the same year, the friends at Boston appealed against some assertions of Mr. Hooke, in the preceding meeting; and the association shewing a disposition to admit their appeal, Mr. Hooke and his party left the assembly abruptly, and protested against its proceedings. Those that remained, being discouraged and perplexed by this defection, and seeing no prospect of advantage from future meetings as long as the minds of all parties continued in such a state of irritation, suspended the association till the churches should see occasion to resume it.

The animosity of both parties, being thus increased, continued, for several years, to distract the churches, and obstruct the progress of the gospel; and no associations were held. The natural effects followed, in the decline of the prosperity and numbers of the various societies, and the decay of vital godliness in individuals. All real Christians became sensible of the necessity of laying aside controversy, and uniting in the support of the common cause; and a meeting of the leaders of both parties was held, July 20th. 1718, at which such mutual apologies and concessions were made, as laid the foundation for future union and co-operation. They agreed "that they were of one faith, as it is contained in the scriptures--that this faith ought to be maintained and defended--that they could not suffer this faith to be opposed or contradicted--and that the scriptures are the only foundations of a true faith; but that such Confessions of Faith as are agreeable to them ought not to be contradicted, nor yet imposed as terms of communion." Considering also the misunderstandings that had been occasioned during these controversies, they besought all the brethren to take satisfaction in their cordial and Christian agreement; and to labour to repair the reputations of those who had, in any way, suffered in their characters." This meeting, likewise, agreed to resume their former associations; and appointed the first to be held at Lincoln, October 14th, following, "for the further establishment of the churches in truth and peace." This association accordingly met; and it appears to have been a season of unanimity and love. Among other important, agreements, we find this pleasing article. "We agree to keep a day of fasting and prayer, in all our churches, to humble ourselves before almighty God, for the great offences that have been committed, in the time of the unhappy divisions, that have been among us; and to give thanks to him that and end hath been put to these divisions: and also to pray that God would bless the peace that is gained in these our churches, and raise up a succession of faithful ministers, that vacant places may be supplied; and that he would bless our nation." This day was fixed for November 17th. 1718; which was observed in all the congregations with great solemnity. [The persons included in this pacification, as the representatives of their respective societies, were Joseph Hooke, of Bourn, Benjamin Sharp, John Hill, and Samuel Ellis, of Lincoln; Joseph Anderton, of Witherton; J. Grant, J. Woodward, J. Anderson, and T. Gilliott, of the Isle of Axholme; T. Ulliyott, of Elsham; J. Crawstone, of the North Marsh; Edward Wood, Edward Makins, Joseph Dent, and J. Hursthouse, of the South Marsh; William Roberts, of Gosberton; N. Locking, R. Barker,

R. Lewis, and R. Anderson, of Asterby; Humphry Fletcher, of Sleaford; Thomas Ellis, J. Booth, and J. Hardy, of Broughton; and Edward Hardy of Spalding. To these must be added, Leonard Isaac, of Tattershall, William Veall, William Wray, and Joseph Brickton who, though not at the association, attended at the previous meetings.]

These contentions had produced the most deplorable effects; *and* the first care of the Lincolnshire association was to endeavour to repair the injury which the cause had received. It was earnestly recommended that Mr. Hooke should devote himself more unreservedly to the visiting of the churches, and the other parts of the messenger's office: and the church at Borun, of which he was pastor, was importuned to set him more at liberty to travel. It is likely, that he was then the only messenger in those parts; as we hear nothing of Mr. Ullyott, after the year 1721. A considerable degree of laxity in discipline, and conformity to the manners of the world, had, during these times of confusion, crept into the different societies. The association, therefore, found it necessary, for many succeeding years, to bear a decided testimony against vain apparel, mixed marriages, games of chance, and other practices which they deemed inconsistent with the simplicity and gravity of the christian character.

The jealousy with which they had watched each other, while at variance, had induced several ministers, under pretence of greater accuracy, to read their sermons. This was so directly opposed to the practice of their most eminent preachers, in the most flourishing times of the general baptist cause, that the association hastened to prevent the evils with which they thought it fraught; and, in 1722, adopted the following strong resolution, "Taking into consideration the corruption, that is like to ensue in the church, by the liberty that some take in reading sermons, under the notion of having them more correct; and falsely call it preaching; we bear our public testimony against, and utterly disallow it: as it tends to the destruction of spiritual gifts, and is like to introduce a mere formality in religion; hinders the edification of souls, and greatly discourages honest and faithful men in the exercise and improvement of their gifts; and wounds the consciences of many sincere persons. We desire, therefore, that such a dangerous practice may be discountenanced in all our churches. [C.A.B. 1722.]

Nor did the members of this association content themselves with mere negative admonitions, but earnestly urged the adoption of every measure that was judged likely to revive the sinking interest. With this view, they exhorted all the churches to encourage meetings for prayer and religious conversation: and strongly insisted on the duty and advantage of a regular system of catechizing children and servants, and of a constant attention to their instruction in the great truths of christianity. To aid in this necessary work, several catechisms were, about this time published by some of their leading ministers.

But the object which appeared to them the most important, and which they recommended with the greatest importunity, was the discovery and cultivation of ministerial gifts and graces. To accomplish this great end, they not only used every prudent and scriptural method; but, for a long series of years, observed annually a day of fasting and prayer, to intreat the great Lord of the harvest to send more labourers into his vineyard.

These zealous endeavours of the ministers appear to have been but feebly seconded by the body at large, and, therefore, to have produced very little effect. Among the worthy christians, who mourned over the decline of the cause of truth, was Mr. John Hursthouse, the pastor of the society at Monksthorpe and Burgh. He had been repeatedly chosen to the messenger's office; but was prevented from accepting it, by the refusal of his church to give him up. In 1729, he printed "An Epistle to the baptized Churches in Lincolnshire," in which he draws an affecting parallel between their former state of prosperity and the low circumstances into which they had then sunk. "When I consider," he says, "your former unity, and the sweet harmony which was then among you, how constantly and zealously you associated, in those times, in great numbers, to promote the cause and interest of Jesus Christ, the thoughts do sometimes rejoice my soul: but now, alas! I am as Much grieved to behold the reverse!" "It is Satan's old maxim, 'Divide and destroy:' and, in our late contentions, we have lost many of our best men; had little but party interest carried on; our unity quite broken; and anarchy and disorder let in like a flood. We offended our good God, grieved one another's hearts, stumbled inquiring souls, have hindered Christ's cause, and procured to ourselves a dear and deep repentance." "God has strewn his displeasure against our sinful quarrels, in the many awful strokes of his providence, by which he has removed from us, in so few years, so many of our best and ablest ministers; and by raising up so few to supply their places." "Besides how little we enjoy now of the presence of God, compared with what we have experienced in times past. What sweet fellowship had we together before our divisions! Our fellowship was then with the Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord. How amiable has his tabernacle been, how delightful our christian society, because the Lord was with us. But, brethren, when did you feel and perceive his presence? Surely not as in times past. How glad were you, in those times, to assemble together! How much rejoiced in the enjoyment! and how unwilling to part! But now, alas! no thronging, no desire, no pains taken. Surely the Lord is not with us as formerly!" -- "Again. The sad decay and the declining state of the baptized churches in Lincolnshire is another proof of the divine displeasure. How many once flourishing congregations are become thin; and some have scarce any monument of a church left behind! I know but of very few out of many, that remain in their ancient flourishing state. How many of our lights are extinguished, and the candlesticks removed out of their places! And that which is yet worse, how unconcerned do we appear to be! What little notice do we take of it! How insensible of the danger and ruin which threaten us! Does it not look as though the Lord had left us to chuse our own delusions, and to reap the fruit our own devises?"

The accuracy of this discouraging account of the low state of the general baptist cause in Lincolnshire, at this time, is fully confirmed by the minutes of their associations: and, what is more to be lamented, this decline continued till long after the conclusion of this period. Their subsequent history, indeed, consists chiefly of a series of well-meant, but unsuccessful efforts, made by a few friends, of the souls of men, to rouse the attention of their contemporaries to a sense of their danger, and to arrest the total decay of their congregations.

At the time when the pamphlet from which we have made the above extracts was published, Mr. Hooke was advanced in years, and oppressed with infirmities; yet he still continued his labours to promote the prosperity of the churches. He added a Postscript to Mr. Hursthouse's Epistle, pressing the brethren to activity, union, and order: and, notwithstanding his age, persevered in visiting the various parts of his diocese. October 5th. 1736, he presided at an association at Lincoln: and, it is probable, that he was unable to return to his friends; as he died, in that city, on the 23rd of the following month. He had been, for sixty years, an honourable member of the baptized churches; forty-nine of which he had been the pastor of the general baptist church at Bourn and Hackenby; and, during forty years, had sustained the office of messenger. We have no account of his birth; but he could not, at the time of his decease, have been much less than eighty years of age. Through the long course of his service in the church, Mr. Hooke appears to have been actuated by a sincere desire to promote the honour of his Saviour, and the salvation of sinners. His labours were abundant: and, considering the advantage which he had enjoyed, his abilities and acquirements were very respectable. The unhappy times in which he was called to act, discovered, indeed, on several occasions, that he was a man of like passions with his brethren: yet he evidently was, on the whole, a worthy man, a pious Christian, and a faithful and successful minister:--one of the principal ornaments and supports of the general baptist cause in Lincolnshire.

The association had, for some time before Mr. Hooke's death, been looking out for a proper person to assist him in his arduous duties; and, having been disappointed of obtaining Mr. Hursthouse, they applied to Mr. William Johnson, who was, probably, pastor of a church in the Isle of Ely. October 30th. 1731, he was solemnly ordained, by Mr. Hooke, "to serve the churches in Lincolnshire, in conjunction with those in the Isle of Ely, in the office of messenger." After the decease of his venerable colleague, the whole care of the churches devolved on Mr. Johnson, who was laudably diligent in the oversight of them. He was punctual in attending meetings, and annually visited most of the societies under his superintendence. But his vigilant attention to the concerns of religion injured his temporal circumstances, which, in 1744, became deeply embarrassed. The churches contributed towards extricating him from his difficulties; but he found it necessary, in 1745, to remove to Coventry. He visited Lincolnshire occasionally after this removal, and presided, as senior messenger, at the association in 1749. He appears to have preserved the esteem of his friends, notwithstanding his misfortunes; as he was employed, in 1743, in the ordination of Mr. G. Boyce, and styled "our beloved brother Johnson." He died at Coventry, in the eighty-eighth year of his age.

When Mr. Johnson removed to Coventry, it was judged proper to provide another to fill his place. A committee was, therefore, appointed by the association, to fix on proper persons: and Messrs. W. Penney, of Lincoln, James Grant, of Asterby, and John Goode, of Boston, were nominated as candidates. Mr. Penney declined the honour; and Mr. Grant, probably, died soon after, as we hear no more of him: Mr. J. Goode, therefore, was ordained messenger May 9, 1744, by Mr. Johnson. It was also proposed that Mr. Halford, pastor of the churches at Bourn and Coningsby, should be raised to the same rank; but, for some reason unassigned, this design did not take effect.

Mr. Goode appears to have attended to the duties of his station with assiduity and zeal; but few of the ministers were inspired with the same spirit. The associations were very thinly attended: and It was in vain that those who did attend sent letters and exhortations to the ministers and churches that absented themselves. The union of heart and interest which had so firmly cemented them in former times, was, alas! no more: each looked on his own things. The methodists, too, who now began to be active and zealous, drew away many of their members: and, though the association, in 1745, declared "their faith and practice to be contrary to the holy scriptures, and to the peace and welfare of their societies," and denounced the discipline of the church against such as attended their meetings; yet the warmth and affection which animated the new professors triumphed, in many instances, over the decrees and threatenings of this feeble synod. To strengthen their bands, they renewed their ancient connection with the general assembly in London, which had been interrupted for nearly forty years; and, in 1750, sent Mr. Goode to that meeting, as the representative of the baptized churches in Lincolnshire. This re-union was, probably, hastened by a friendly epistle the assembly had previously addressed to these churches; inviting them to a co-operation, and exhorting them to be careful in encouraging and cultivating the gifts of young men who promised to be useful in the ministry: informing them, at the same time, of the general baptist fund for the education and support of ministers. This letter was dated December 7th, 1748, and signed Joseph Morris and J. Neele.

But the general baptist interest, in these parts, sustained a great loss, soon afterwards, by the unexpected removal of Mr. Goode. On Lord's-day, December 1st. 1751, he preached twice, with his usual animation, and administered the Lord's-supper. At ten the evening, he retired to rest, apparently in good health and at eight, the next morning, was found lying on the floor of his apartment, speechless, senseless, and incapable of moving. In this state, he lingered till midnight, when he gasped and expired. "He was," says a contemporary writer, "an active, shining man, and zealous to promote his master's cause.

Being thus deprived of their worthy messenger, the association elected Gilbert Boyce, pastor of the churches at Coningsby and Asterby, to that office: and he was ordained, Sept. 3rd. 1753, by Mr. W. Johnson.

Though Mr. Boyce was active and earnest in his exertions to revive the declining state of the congregations under his superintendence, the success was, by no means, proportioned to his efforts. The accession of Messrs. W. Thompson and D. Taylor, gave a transient impulse to the zeal of these professors ; but it soon subsided. One minister after another dropped into the grave; and few were raised up to supply the vacant places. The congregations, of course, dwindled away; and, in many instances, the churches became extinct. In 1776, the meeting-house in Lincoln, which, for more than seventy years, had been a kind of metropolis for the baptized churches of the general faith, in Lincolnshire, where they held their associations, was lent to the particular baptists; on condition of keeping it in repair, and permitting the general baptists to preach in it when they could find opportunity.

The doctrinal opinions of these churches, during this period, appear to have been very unsettled. The philosophising spirit which had unhappily seized this denomination of christians at the commencement of the century, continued to operate, and produced a laxity of principle and depression of sentiment, that had a very baneful effect. A little before the formation of the New Connection, two unsuccessful attempts were made to fix on some standard of faith: one, by proposing the adoption of a Confession, published in 1724, which agrees with the Confession of 1660: and the other, by appointing Mr. Boyce to draw up a number of articles of the christian faith, as near as he could to the judgment of these churches." The good man complied, and submitted his creed to the association; but it was rejected, "because it was mostly expressed in scriptural terms."

These ministers were much more united and consistent in their views of the importance of conversation becoming the gospel, in those who professed to be the followers of Christ: though it must be confessed that their frequent "testimonies" in favour of it, may raise a suspicion that it was not so generally maintained as it ought to have been. Throughout nearly the whole of this period, they inserted in the minutes of each association a number of resolutions, adapted to discourage vain amusements and sinful compliances with the customs and fashions of the world, and to encourage propriety of character and conduct: and each minister was enjoined "to make it his business to explain and reason upon each article to his people for their further use and profit."--They retained, also, in a good degree, the strictness of their ancient discipline respecting the calling out of ministers. They "allowed no person to preach in any of their congregations, who was not well known or recommended: and no young preacher was permitted to preach another congregation, before he was approved by the elder and church to which he belonged." And it was made a condition of the loan of the Lincoln meeting house, "that none should be allowed to preach therein, but such as were baptized believers, and had been regularly called to the work of the ministry.

Such appears to have been the Progress of the general baptist interest in Lincolnshire, previous to the formation of the New Connection. That event caused a considerable sensation in these churches, especially at the association it, 1770, when those members who afterwards united in forming the New Connection, announced their intention of withdrawing. In the following year, the churches that adhered to the association were only seven: the church at Coningsby, consisting of eighty or ninety members; at Fleet, of forty or fifty; [Fleet church joined the New Connection in 1770; but the following year re-united itself to the Lincolnshire Association: and it was not till several years afterwards that it finally left that assembly] at Gosberton, of twenty-six; at Knipton, of eighteen; at Monksthorp, of one hundred; and at Tetney, of twenty-six: and that association was attended by only four elders, and three unordained ministers. [Hursthouse's Epistle, passim. Minutes of the Lincolnshire Association from 1700 to 1770--B.M.S.S.]

SECT. 5.--The History of the Churches at Spalding, Fleet, and Boston, from the Close of the Seventeenth Century to the Commencement of the New Connection.

Having thus given a concise account of the proceedings of the whole body of general baptists in Lincolnshire, it will be proper to look back and trace, as distinctly as we are

able, the transactions of the churches at Fleet and Boston, which *assisted, by* their representatives, at the formation of the New Connection. But, as the congregation at Fleet was, for along time, only a branch of the church at Spalding, it will be necessary to introduce the history of that society, during this period: and, as Spalding ultimately joined the New Connection, this digression will not be foreign to our design.

The rise of the general baptist cause at Spalding, and its introduction to the vicinity of Fleet, have been already recorded. [Vol. I. pp. 106, 214-218, 317, 318.] That interest, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, comprized the congregations at Spalding, Gosberton, and Fleet. This large society was then under the pastoral care of Mr. William Roberts, who was ordained in 1699. His usual residence was at Gosberton; and, therefore, when several elders were chosen to assist him at the other places, he was styled, in the Minutes of the association, "the elder of Gosberten." At that period, Mr. Robert Vellem, an assistant preacher, laboured at Fleet, with so much regularity, as to be styled their minister: and several other "brethren confirmed in the ministry" were equally active in their respective stations.

But Mr. Roberts did not continue long the sole elder. In 1703, Mr. Joseph Pickerton, and, in 1708, Mr. John Hursthouse, both of Spalding, were raised to the same dignity. Scott afterwards, Mr. Edward Hardy, who had been for some time an approved preacher, was also advanced to the pastoral office. Thus it appears, that, in 1710, there were four elders in this church, besides a number of acceptable ministers:--a strong evidence of the flourishing state of religion.

This encouraging prospect, however, soon began to be clouded. In February, 1715, Mr. John Hursthouse, one of their highly valuable elders, died. His funeral sermon was preached, by his colleague, Mr. W. Roberts, from Isa. 57:2: and his death was a severe loss to the cause. His family was honourable. He and his wife were baptized together, Aug. 11th. 1687, when they had two sons and two daughters. They entered into the spirit of the gospel; and trained up their children in the way in which they ought to walk, and had the satisfaction to find, that, when they were old, they did not depart from it. In 1690, their two daughters devoted themselves, at the same time, to the Lord by baptism; the one being eighteen years of age, and the other fourteen: and, in 1697, their two sons united to follow their example: the one in the twenty-second and the other in the fifteenth year of his age. Nor did these young professors decline from their course, but persevered to the close of their lives: the daughters becoming mothers in Israel; and the sons eminent ministers of the gospel and worthy pastors of churches.--Their father, being in affluent circumstances and zealous in the cause of his Redeemer, was very helpful in the pecuniary concern of the church. Towards the erection of the first meeting-house at Spalding, which cost only eighty-three pounds, he generously subscribed twenty pounds: and, at his decease, he bequeathed the like sum as a legacy to the congregation. Little did the good man suppose, that it would soon be required for the same object as his former donation.

In a few months after his death, April 1st. 1715, a destructive fire broke out in Spalding, and consumed the meeting house and almost all the other buildings in that part of the

town in which it stood. A new one was immediately built, at, an expence of one hundred and forty pounds; which was raised in about two years, by the exertions of their own friends, and the aid of sister churches. But, it seems, the projectors paid more attention to accommodation than to elegance. The interior had an unfinished appearance: the pulpit was clumsy; the pews, few; and the floor, brick. It continued, however, unaltered for seventy years.

About this period, there were several approved ministers labouring for this society, of whom it may be proper to take some notice.--W. Baron was, it may be concluded, possessed of popular talents, as he was appointed by the church, in 1716, to preach a sermon on Discipline. Nothing further respecting him has been preserved except that his widow died in 1750.--Isaac Hinman was both a preacher and deacon; and, for some years, his labours were frequent and acceptable. But his doctrinal views, on some important points, were different from those, of his friends; and caused considerable altercation. In 1708, reports being spread, that Mr. J. Hursthouse and he entertained heretical opinions, they wrote letters to the association, justifying themselves from the charges: and that assembly, having considered their letters, believed them to be sound in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, both with respect to his divinity and humanity;" and ordered copies of their letters to be sent to all the congregations. Ten years after this, the same charges were revived against Mr. Hinman; and a general meeting of the three branches of the church was convened, when he was excluded from their communion.*

[* The minutes of these meetings, being decisive as to the tenets of these professors, at this time, deserve to be recorded.

"Spalding, June 10th, 1719.

"At a solemn meeting of all the Congregations, viz Spalding, Gosberton, and Fleet, brother Isaac Hinman appeared amongst us; and upon a full and fair hearing, we find him to deny the equality of the Son of God to the Father, as to his divine, nature; and, that he had no being, but in purpose and promise, till his incarnation: and in his highest capacity is inferior to the Father, or words to the same purpose; which he refused to retract as error:--So we, the Brethren whose names are under written, agreed, that he is not of our faith, which has been the faith of our churches, before our time; and, whilst he remains in his present mind, we cannot allow him to be a preacher amongst us, nor admit him to Communion with us. but pity and pray for him, and leave him to his own thoughts and the mercy of God."

Signed,

William Roberts, John Pickerton, Edward Hardy, Matthew Hursthouse,
And twenty-two more, in behalf of the rest.
Spalding, May 28th. 1722.

"At a meeting, held to revise brother Hinman's case which was heard in this place, June 10th. 1719:--We find he retracts that saying, that Christ had no being but in purpose and promise, and condemns before his incarnation. This he disallows now, and condemns as

error. And withal owns the equality of the Son with the Father in certain essential properties; as far, he says, as the holy scriptures speak of it.--excepting only self-existence and prime casualty, of which he apprehends the scriptures not to speak: which seem to divers of us cloudy expressions, and to interfere with the sacred faith of the Trinity, which has been the faith of this church, and of our churches generally. Nevertheless, in order that peace and unity may be kept and observed, our beloved brother Hinman doth promise not to oppose to the disturbance of the peace of the church, that faith we have constantly maintained; but to walk in love with his brethren and we desire that all old things should be buried that have been matter of contention as though they had not been."

Signed

Joseph Hooke, for peace sake, though a paragraph is omitted which I supposed to be in. Edward Hardy, John Pickerton, William Roberts, John Hursthouse, and thirty-one more, in behalf of the rest.]

In 1722, in consequence of some alteration in his sentiments, and to preserve the peace of the Society in which he had some partizans, he was restored to fellowship, but there is no evidence of his being afterwards permitted to preach. He died in 1734.--Goss Torrington and John Bullimer began to preach, at Fleet in 1716; but were soon called from their labours: the latter dying in 1720, and the former surviving him only three years.--W. Blades, a poor but worthy christian, was also acceptably engaged in the sacred work. He was baptized in 1624; and we find him, in 1702, employed in the humble situation of sexton to the congregation. After losing sight of him for several years we meet him again, in 1716, acting in the office of deacon, though still in narrow circumstances. In less than two years, he was classed among "the brethren confirmed in the ministry:" and, from the frequency of his engagements, it is probable that his labours were acceptable. He died in 1722.

Mr. Matthew Hursthouse the eldest son of their deceased pastor, Mr. John Hursthouse, was called to the eldership, in 1718: his labours however were terminated by death, in 1720. And in, 1724, this society was deprived of two other of its elders. John Pickerton died towards the close of the year, at an advanced age; and of Mr. William Roberts we have no later information than May 25th, when he attended the Lincolnshire Association. His abilities as a preacher must have stood high in the estimation of his brethren; as he was selected to officiate on several public occasions: particularly, in 1708 when Mr. Ulliyott being called to the office of messenger, he was appointed, by the Association to preach the sermon at the ordination.

Mr. Edward Hardy was for several years the only elder over this extended society; when most of the brethren who occasionally assisted in the work of the ministry had been removed by death. Mr. Hardy survived till 1731, as he had been a member of the church thirty-seven years, and had a family of three children, when he joined it, he must then have attained a good old age. There is reason to believe that his outward circumstances were low; but he maintained his reputation among his brethren in the ministry to the last;

and, in the minutes of the Association in 1730, his name is subscribed next to the messenger's.

During the latter years of his life, Mr. Hardy had been assisted in the ministry by Mr. Thomas Blades, probably a kinsman of William Blades already mentioned. Mr. T. Blades was styled "a brother confirmed in the ministry," in 1721; and frequently supplied the congregation at Fleet. In 1734, he was elected to the pastoral office; and for sixteen years seems to have had the whole oversight of the church till his death. [In 1750, he was appointed to preach at the next Association; but, on signing his name to the minutes, excepted against the appointment. Death preserved him from this service, by removing him to his reward, Oct. 26th. 1750.]

His son William Blades who had begun to preach long before the death of his father, was on that event, nominated to the eldership, though it does not appear that he ever attained to it. He was however regularly employed as a preacher, and appears to have been well approved.

The congregation at Spalding, which had been considered as the principal seat of this interest, had now considerably declined: and, from the death of Mr. Thomas Blades, was destitute of a pastor, till long after the close of the period now under review. The few members that remained were supplied by the occasional labours of neighbouring ministers. For some time, Mr. J. Halford [this good man, after labouring upwards of forty years in the ministry, lost his life, about 1759, by the mistake of his apothecary, who administered too large a quantity of opium, during a fit of the gout], of Bourn, visited them at intervals, and administered the ordinances; and, after his decease, Mr. Joseph Anderson,** pastor of the church at Gosberton., took this declining cause under his temporary inspection. Mr. G. Boyce, also, in the discharge of the messenger's office, sometimes travelled to Spalding, and favoured them with his advice and assistance. But such interrupted labours could not be expected to revive a drooping interest: and, at the time of the formation of the New Connection, this church seems to have been almost extinct. We, therefore, now turn our attention to that branch of this ancient society which assembled at Fleet.

[** Mr. Joseph. Anderson was a very respectable minister, who was ordained to the pastoral office over the church at Gosberton, in 1763. It was remarkable, that this minister who was appointed to preach the Association sermon in 1781, and Mr B. Thornally who was nominated for the same service, in case of his failure, both died before that meeting; the former, August 10th. 1781, and the latter, November 13th, 1780.]

After Mr. Vellem's decease, in 1711, it does not appear that any of the numerous preachers, with which the church at Spalding then abounded, took the interest at Fleet so much under his care, as to be esteemed its minister. Many of them laboured occasionally there; but Mr. Roberts, of Gosberton, was the most frequent visitor. The cause was thus supported and extended. In 1723, so many had joined from them at Lutton, a neighbouring village, that the public worship was held, and the Lord's supper

administered, alternately at that place and Fleet; till 1729, when the meetings at Lutton were discontinued.

In 1740, Mr. T. Blades, the elder at Spalding, held a church-meeting at Fleet; when a list was made of the members there, which contained thirty-six names: and, in the following year, five more were added; raising the number to forty-one. Of these, seven dwelt at Fleet, twenty-one at Gedney, eight at Holbeach, and three at Lutton. The majority of the members living thus at Gedney, public worship was removed to that place, in the middle of the same year. They met in a large room, belonging to a house occupied by Mr. John Bullimer, one of their deacons.

During the remainder of the life of Mr. T., Blades, he visited Fleet monthly, to preach and administer the ordinances. His son, William Blades, preached for them every fortnight; and continued to supply them, in this manner, for several years after the death of his worthy father. But this dependence on the visits of strangers being precarious, and disappointments from various causes frequently occurring, the church was led to seek for more regular assistance.

Mr. William Kidd, in 1744, removing his habitation from the neighbourhood of Coningsby to Fleet, was honourably dismissed from the church at the former place to the latter. Such was his regular conduct, that, in 1751, he was advanced to the deacon's office; and, induced by the necessities of the congregation, attempted to lead public worship, and expound the scriptures. These attempts being well received, he was encouraged to proceed; and his gifts gradually improving, he grew daily more acceptable. In 1762, the church unanimously invited him to accept the oversight of that branch of the interest; and he became the first pastor that was ordained over the church at Fleet, as a distinct society. When he began to preach, the society consisted of thirty-one members; but before he assumed the eldership, seventeen had been added to their number; though, by reason of deaths and removals, the whole society then amounted to thirty-six only. During the course of his ministry, the increase was proportionable and, at his decease, he left fifty persons in communion,

Soon after he assumed the pastoral office, the increase of hearers, joined to some other circumstances, rendered it inconvenient to conduct public worship in the room at Gedney; and the society determined to build a meetinghouse, at Fleet. Having procured a suitable piece of ground, they exerted themselves, and erected a plain edifice; which was opened for public worship, Sept. 2d. 1764. Though the general baptists had maintained their cause in this neighbourhood for eighty-two years, this was the first meeting-house which they had enjoyed. Mr. Kidd continued his pastoral and ministerial duties with increasing usefulness; and was made the happy instrument of much good to the cause of religion. But his race was run:-- he was called to his reward, in Oct. 1768. His character was truly amiable; and his memory is still cherished, with tender veneration, by those few of his friends whom death has yet spared.

Some time before Mr. Kidd's lamented decease, Mr. Henry Poole, who had been a preacher among the methodists, joined the church at Fleet. After Mr. Kidd's death, he

laboured amongst them for about three years; and, in 1770, attending the meeting when the New Connection was formed. At that, Fleet church consisted of an unordained minister, two deacons, and fifty members: their public opportunities were well attended; and religion appeared reviving. [Lincolnshire Asso. Min. B.M.S.S. from Spalding and Fleet church Books. Min. of Asso. of N.C. &c.]

It only remains, that we close this chapter with a succinct account of the proceedings of the general. baptist church at Boston, Lincolnshire, from the conclusion of the former volume to the formation of the New Connection,

We have already seen, that a society of professors of this denomination existed, in this town, so early as 1653; to which the celebrated Thomas Grantham united himself, when he commenced his religious course: and that, at the close of the seventeenth century, it was destitute of a pastor, and in a low state. For some time afterwards, Mr. Roberts, of Gosberton supplied it frequently; and, to a certain extent, exercised the pastoral office in it; so as to be styled, by the members of this church, "our elder." But, as he continued his connection with the church at Gosberton, his superintendence was irregular, and his labours interrupted; and the cause of the Redeemer continued to droop,. He, therefore joined with Mr. T. Ulliyott, the messenger, in advising the friends at Boston to call Mr. Ebenezer Hall to preside over them. With this advice, the church complied; and, May 22d. 1715, twenty-nine members signed the minutes of the church-meeting, by which he was called to the pastoral office. Twenty-seven others expressed their concurrence by letter: so that the society then consisted of fifty-six members. Mr. Hall appears to have been a respectable practitioner in physic, and a doctor of Medicine. He published several pieces on religious subjects. His eldership was terminated by death, Oct. 14th. 1722; when he had presided over this church no more than seven years. During this short period, thirty-one persons had been added to their number by baptism: among whom were several who afterwards became ornaments to their profession, and great supports to the cause of their Saviour.

This society being thus left destitute, invited several neighbouring ministers to meet and consult on the proper measures to be adopted who unanimously advised the calling of Mr. John Willey to preside over it. Mr. Willey, who formerly resided in the neighbourhood of Bourn, had been a member of the church at Spalding; and, in 1688, was reckoned among "the gifted brethren" in that congregation. But, having removed his dwelling to Boston, he became a member of the church in that town; and, probably, had occasionally preached amongst them during the whole of Mr. Hall's eldership. He, was, therefore, unanimously invited to accept the pastoral office; and ordained by Mr. J. Hooke, Nov. 29th. 1722. The invitation given him was signed by fifty-five members. He did not continue long in this office: --for, in May, 1729, he "voluntarily absented himself from the congregation." What induced him to withdraw from the sacred work does not appear: but it is evident, from the subsequent proceedings, that there wasn't imputation either on his moral or religious character. [This may fairly be inferred from his signing the agreement with Mr. Hursthouse, his successor; and from provision being made in that agreement for his resuming the pastoral office, "if he pleased to assist as formerly and they pleased to have it so." Boston Church Book.] Yet, his, services do not appear to have

been either regular or satisfactory; as the church applied frequently, during his eldership, to the Lincolnshire association, for ministerial assistance. This was especially the case in 1724 when Messrs. J. Hooke, N. Locking, J. Hursthouse undertook to preach at Boston once a fortnight, "till they should be otherwise supplied:" and, in 1725, when Mr. L. Isaac was requested to visit them as often as he could, for the purpose "of keeping up order, and administering the ordinances to them." In this uncertain and disorderly state of things, it is not surprizing that the cause of Christ should decline; and that, in 1729, the number of effective members was reduced to little more than thirty.

On Mr. Willey's final secession, the church resolved to request Mr. John Hursthouse to take them under his care. This respectable and pious minister was the younger son of Mr. Matthew Hursthouse, of Spalding, already mentioned. He was then the elder of a flourishing general baptist church at Burgh and Monksthorpe; but had removed his residence to Boston. As he appears to have had an acceptable assistant, who frequently supplied his place at Monksthorpe, he had opportunities of preaching for this church and his services were so well approved, that they solicited him to become their elder. With this request he complied, in June following; after having obtained the consent of his own church. The church at Boston enjoyed his labours and vigilance for seven or eight years, and the work of the Lord prospered in his hands: as, when he resigned his charge, the members were more than eighty.

Mr. Hursthouse's assistant at Monksthorpe being removed by death, in 1738, he found it necessary to leave Boston; and, therefore, to dissolve his connection with that church. All parties acquiesced in this measure with less reluctance, as divine Providence appeared to have raised up a suitable person to fill the vacant office. Mr. John Goode had, for a considerable time, preached occasionally for them; and, to use their own words, they "had made full proof of his doctrine, and observation of his conversation; and believed him to be every way qualified to take upon him the office of an elder and pastor over a people." He was, therefore, unanimously invited to assume the charge of this congregation; and, Aug. 2d 1738, was ordained by Mr. W. Johnson, messenger.

During the first years after Mr. Goode's ordination, his labours were abundantly blessed, and additions to the church were numerous. But, it is probable, that, when he undertook the oversight of this society, discipline had been neglected - and when he endeavoured to revive it, he was but feebly supported by his friends. For, though meetings for this purpose were regularly held, during the whole time of his presiding over them, yet few attended at them, and the proceedings were often protracted to an injurious length. In 1744, Mr. Goode was chosen messenger of the churches; and the duties of that station probably called him frequently from his own place. The cause, therefore, appears to have been less prosperous in the latter years of his ministry, than in the former: the additions were few, and the zeal and circumspection of too many of the more ancient members decreased. Such was the state of the church, when it pleased God to call him to his rest, Dec. 2d. 1751; in the affecting manner which we have had occasion to record in a former section.

For twelve years after Mr. Goode's decease, this church remained destitute of a pastor. It was supplied, for a great part of this interval, by Mr. Samuel Durance, who had removed from Leicester; but he was never called to the office of elder. Though the want of proper officers, the disorder increased, and the decline of the cause became more rapid. Yet a few additions were, from time to time, made to their numbers; and, from Mr. Goode's death, to 1760, fourteen were received by baptism, and thirteen by recommendation from sister churches.

Through these discouraging times, the interest at Boston owed much to the zeal and prudence of two valuable members, Messrs. Thomas Saul and his son John. The former had been baptized under Mr. Hall, June 5th. 1720, and had continued an useful and steady friend to the cause through all the changes which it had experienced. His son had joined the church, Sept. 4th. 1753, and entered warmly into all the views and wishes of his worthy father. They exerted themselves in procuring ministers, and keeping up the worship of God, when too many neglected it. In 1762, they both attended the Lincolnshire association, where they heard Mr. W. Thompson preach, from Gal. 6:15. The discourse gave them so much satisfaction, that they took an opportunity of conversing with the preacher. Finding that there existed some opposition against his principles at Hull, where he then was settled, they earnestly invited him to remove to Boston; and gave him proper encouragement respecting his support. Mr. Thompson declined giving them a positive answer, at that time; but the contentions increasing on his return to Hull, he determined to pay a visit to Boston. His labours were highly acceptable; and in July, the same year, twenty-seven of the members united in requesting him to become their stated preacher. He assented; and removed, with his family, to Boston, in the following September.

The cause of religion was then very low in this society. There were scarcely forty nominal members; and too many of these were irregular and ineffective. The place of worship was in a ruinous state, and the hearers few, and composed chiefly of the lowest classes of society. Mr. Thompson, however, pursued his great work with zealous diligence, and a humble dependence on the divine blessing, for success. Nor were his hopes disappointed; a pleasing revival soon appeared; and, on Sept. 18th 1763, he baptized eight persons on a profession of faith. He was much encouraged by the affectionate sympathy of his friend, Mr. Saul; who manifested a truly parental solicitude for him and his family, and heartily entered into all his measures to promote the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. But it pleased God, whose thoughts are not our thoughts, to deprive him, at the commencement of his labours, of this valuable friend: Mr. Thomas Saul died June 13th. 1763, aged sixty-eight years. Mr. Thompson was deeply affected with this event, and preached a funeral sermon, at the request of the deceased, from 1 Cor. 15:27: a passage very expressive of his own happy experience.

Mr. Saul's liberality to the poor, especially to poor saints, and the ministers of the gospel, will long be gratefully remembered. He had observed, with pain, the decay of the place of worship occupied by the general baptists; and determined to provide more convenient accommodations. Just before his death, he laid the foundation of a new meeting-house, in Goatstreet, Boston. His son generously fulfilled the liberal intention of his father; and,

having completed the building, at an expence of five hundred pounds, transferred it, and the ground on which it stood, to trustees, for the use of the church. It was opened, June 24th. 1764, by Mr. Dan Taylor, of Yorkshire, who delivered three discourses, on the occasion, to crowded auditors.

Being thus accommodated with a convenient place of worship, the congregations increased, and the external prospect was encouraging. But the internal concerns of the church were still disorganized: they had no officers, and proper discipline had long been neglected.* Messrs. Charles

[* When this society resolved upon reviving discipline, they entered some reflections, and regulations for the prosecution of their object, on their records; which, as they may be useful to other churches in similar circumstances, we venture to transcribe.

"At our first meeting for the exercise of discipline, Aug. 27th. 1765, we took into consideration the present state of the church; and, upon inspection, finding many things wanted rectifying, with respect to church discipline and good government, according to the word of God, our only rule of faith and practice; we determined to do all that in us lies to revive and restore good order amongst us as a church of Christ. We look upon it, that, for some time past, public offenders have not been dealt with according to the mind of Christ; and that private offences have not been managed as the word of God directs. Some have gone astray; but have not been sought after, or admonished to return. Some have been under church censure for years; but have neither been admonished, in order to be reclaimed, nor excluded from standing as members. And several other disorders require our serious attention, and ought to be amended.

"1. We, therefore, whose names are under-written, do agree for the future, that any member who is guilty of adultery, fornication, theft, covetousness, extortion, or drunkenness, shall be informed of by the first member who becomes acquainted with such practices, who shall acquaint the church immediately, without screening any person whatsoever: and that the person guilty of such atrocious crimes shall be dealt with by the church as the word of God directs, without partiality, according to the nature of the sin, and the circumstances attending it.

"2. We further agree, that if any member of this church is guilty of disorderly walking, viz. working not, being a busy-body, tale-bearer, tattler, division-maker, or companion, unnecessarily, of carnal persons, or is proud and unfriendly, and of a conversation not according to the gospel of Christ and is observed by a fellow-member so acting, the member who observes this disorderly conduct shall first admonish the offender in love, next take another or two with him, and repeat the admonition. If this fail, then the church must be made acquainted with it and, after they have admonished him, if he still persist in such practices, we must withdraw from every such person: that is, set him apart from having communion with us. Thus we judge ought to act toward all private offenders whatsoever.

"3. We further agree to seek up those who have already gone astray; and to proceed as the scripture directs, in order to reclaim them, or otherwise to cut off all public offenders. We, therefore, appoint our brother Stephen Small, and our brother James Munk, to reprove and admonish," &c. &c.]

Low and Stephen Small were, therefore, appointed to act as deacons; and, Sept. 24th h. 1764, Thompson was ordained to the pastoral office by Mr. G. Boyce. They also endeavoured to promote a conversation becoming the gospel, among the members, by holding meetings for discipline, and taking prudent steps to reclaim the wandering, or to withdraw from such as continued to walk disorderly. Private and family prayer, and the religious instruction of children and servants, were strongly recommended; and a spirit of friendly vigilance over each other, encouraged. The great Head of the church was pleased to bless these exertions to the prosperity of his cause. The society increased in numbers and character; and, at the commencement of the New Connection, in 170, consisted of a pastor, two deacons, seventy-six members, and two young preachers. Besides public service twice every Lord's-day, and frequent preaching in the neighbouring villages, they had a meeting on the Lord's-day evenings, "for prayer and recollection of the sermons;" and another on Tuesday evenings, "for christian conversation, prayer, singing, and communicating christian experience."

This church appears to have proceeded very orderly in joining itself to the New Connection. After Mr. Thompson's return from the first association, the Articles of Faith, agreed upon at that assembly were laid before the members, at a discipline meeting, for their approbation. When they had been three months under consideration, they were, by order of a subsequent meeting, copied into the church-book: and, at the close of them, this declaration affixed:--"We, whose names are hereunto annexed, do approve of the above articles; judging them to be agreeable to the scriptures of' truth." To this declaration, the names of forty-nine members are subscribed. A similar minute records their desire to stand connected with the new assembly formed in London; and is signed by fifty-one members. [Boston Church Book--Lincolnshire Ass. Min.--D. Taylor's Memoirs of W. Thompson.--Min. Ass. N. C.]

BOOK II.

THE HISTORY OF THE NEW CONNECTION OF ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS, FROM ITS ORIGIN TO THE PRESENT TIME.

CHAP. I.

THE FORMATION OF THE NEW CONNECTION, AND ITS HISTORY DURING THE PERIOD OF THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS.

SECT. I.--The Formation of the New Connection.

We have distressing evidence, in the preceding books, that a great diversity of opinion respecting some important parts of christian doctrine, caused, for a long series of years, very unpleasant altercations among the body of professors, who are the subject of this history. This was especially the case, soon after the middle of the last century, with the churches and ministers which composed the Lincolnshire Association. Some of them adhered to the principles which had distinguished the English General Baptists, in their best days; and asserted, the Divinity of the Saviour--the atonement made for sin by his death--Justification by Faith alone--and Regeneration by tile Holy Spirit. Others either denied these doctrines entirely, or explained them in a manner which their friends thought detracted from their dignity, and opposed the oracles of truth. Too many of the old members of this association were of the latter description: and the principal supporters of the former were, Messrs. D. Taylor and William Thompson, who joined that connection in 1763. Such a difference in sentiment naturally produced discussions when the ministers assembled; and the result was, too frequently, an unpleasant degree of altercation.

During these disagreeable contests, Mr. Taylor became acquainted with the societies in the midland counties, which, as we have already seen [Supra, Book I. Chap. I.], were now respectable and numerous; and he was much pleased to find that they esteemed the doctrines, which were the subject of debate, as absolutely essential to christianity. This union in opinion, and the general excellence of their character, made him and his friends desirous of a closer connection with them. Several attempts were made, to induce them to join the Lincolnshire association: and Mr. Boyce, the messenger, visited Loughborough, to endeavour to accelerate this object. But the Leicestershire friends declined all these overtures; and steadily declared that they would never have any connection with persons who maintained the opinions which, as they believed, were held by many of the Lincolnshire general baptists. They went farther; and expressed their opinion very freely that all true friends of the genuine doctrines of christianity ought to separate from all who opposed them: at, the same, stating their readiness to unite with the ministers whose sentiments they approved.

In the year 1769, disputes ran so high, both at the Lincolnshire association and the general assembly, and some circumstances of so disagreeable a nature took place, that many of the friends of the great truths already mentioned were led to conclude that a separation was necessary, for the support of the cause of truth; and, therefore, determined to withdraw themselves from their present associates. They made their intentions known to the Leicestershire churches; and requested an interview, that measures might be prepared for carrying their design into effect. A meeting was accordingly held, at Lincoln, about Michaelunas, 1769; which was attended by Messrs Taylor and Thompson, from the old connection, and Mr. F. Smith, of Melbourn, Mr. Grimley, of Loughborough, and several other of the Leicestershire ministers. It was then resolved that a New Connection should be formed, of such as were assertors of the doctrines which had been

so warmly debated: and that the first association of this should be held in London, June 7th. 1770: at which the ministers from the midland counties promised to be present, if their churches approved of the proposed union. It is probable, that the place of meeting was appointed, to accommodate those general baptists in London and the adjacent counties, who, for similar reasons, were dissatisfied with the general assembly, and agreed in sentiments with the projectors of the New Connection; with whom, therefore, they were ready to co-operate.

This resolution of separating from their former friends, was not adopted by these good men without considerable reluctance. They considered the mischievous effects of all divisions, and hoped that, by patient endeavours, things might be brought into a better state: and, when they found that a separation was necessary for the peace and prosperity of the churches, they did not venture on that measure, before they had spent a considerable time in deliberation, correspondence, and prayer for divine direction. And several ministers and churches, who agreed in doctrinal points with the seceders, fearing the consequences of dividing, continued, for many years, in the old connection. On the other hand, the most pious and worthy ministers, who favoured the opposite doctrines, were most earnest in opposing a measure, which, by dividing their strength, and distracting their efforts, would, they feared, prove injurious to the general baptist cause. Mr. G. Boyce, the Messenger of the baptized churches in Lincolnshire, appears to have laboured zealously to prevent the separation. For this purpose, he visited the congregations in the midland counties; had several interviews with Messrs. D. Taylor and Thompson, and frequently corresponded with them, especially with the former. This good man seems to have been greatly affected with the prospect of the division, and to have exerted all his eloquence to persuade his correspondents to abandon their design. In a letter to Mr. Taylor, dated Feb. 10th. 1770, he observes, "We separate from others, for very just causes and reasons; but for us to separate one from another, what will the world say? What a reproach and scandal will it bring upon its all and upon our holy profession, and the Author of it! O! let it never be. My dear brother, let its take care what we do. Let us make use of every precaution, and take every necessary step that is possible to be taken, to prevent a separation. Let us carefully and constantly follow our meek and lowly Master, with the same temper, and imitate his most excellent example, and shew to all men that we are his disciples, by our love to one another." "Think, O think, and think again, what will be the consequence of a separation. Consider how valuable these are, and of what great benefit and advantage to us all: how much good we may do for one another by steadily and constantly maintaining the same among ourselves. O How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"*

[* It may, perhaps, be acceptable to the reader, to see a statement of the difference in sentiment between the two parties, from the pen of this advocate for peace, who will not be suspected of a wish to exaggerate in his account of them. In a letter, addressed to Mr. D. Taylor, dated May 16th. 1770, he says, "Let us now, therefore, come close to the point; and see wherein we agree, and wherein we differ. 1. You believe, according to what you have written to me, that pure Deity or Godhead is one, pure, simple, uncompounded, undivided Essence or Being, in which is contained all perfection. So do I. 2. I understand you to believe, that this one all perfect Being, or Godhead, is self-

existent, independent and eternal; infinite, unchangeable, and incomprehensible. So do I. In these most two most august and grand points, we are agreed.--In the next place, you believe, or at least I understand you to believe, there Three persons, distinct from each other, revealed to us under the titles or characters of Father, Son, and Holy-Ghost; and that these Three persons, do, independently of each other, equally possess all perfection: or, in other words, that these three Persons make up that one pure, simple, uncompounded undivided Deity: or, that these three persons, considered as above, are but one God. In this we differ.—2. You believe that Jesus Christ is the most high God. In this we differ.—3. You do not seem to believe that the person who is called the Word, John 1:1, came down from heaven. Herein we are not agreed.—These are the things we do not agree, and which we are to talk of, in order that we may agree.”]

But the breach was now too wide to be closed. To all this rhetoric the seceders calmly replied: "It is not to be doubted, if we regard the bible, that some of the vilest errors are, in this age, maintained by some of the general baptists, with as much warmth and zeal as they have ever been by any party of men, in former ages. It behooves us, therefore, to take the alarm; and, with all the little might we have, to militate against these pernicious tenets, which our forefathers so much abhorred, and the word of God so expressly condemns." With such sentiments as these, no reconciliation could be expected: and the discontented party adhered to their resolution.

The proposed meeting was accordingly held, agreeably to the appointment, June 6th. 1770 at the meeting-house in Church Lane, Whitechapel. This first Association was attended by Samuel Deacon, of Boston; John Tarratt and Nathaniel Pickering, of Kegworth; John Grimley, of Loughbough; William Smith and George Hickling, of Longford; Francis Smith and Thomas Perkins, of Melbourn: the ministers of the churches in the midland counties whose friends had cordially acceded to the proposal for an union. They were met by Dan Taylor, of Wadsworth, and William Thompson, of Boston, who had been connected with the Lincolnshire association; John Brittain, of Church Lane, London; William Summers, of the Park, Southwark John Knott, of Eythorn; James Fenn, of Deal; J. Stanger, of Bessell's Green; David Wilkin, of Halsted; Charles Parman, of Castle Headingham; and R. French, of Coggeshall.

Previous to any definitive measures, it was thought proper to take a respectful leave of their former associates in the general assembly, which was then sitting in London: and a deputation was sent, June 6th. to that meeting,--to acquaint them design of withdrawing from their connection--to assign the reason for the separation--and, in a friendly manner, to bid them farewell. The following morning, Mr. D. Taylor preached from 2 Tim. 1:8: "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." In the afternoon, the ministers and representatives assembled to prosecute the purpose of their meeting; when Mr. D. Taylor, was called to the chair, and Messrs. J. Knott and W. Thompson were chosen moderators. After solemn prayer to the Father of lights, for his direction and blessing, an union was formed under the designation of "The New Connection of General Baptists, *formed in 1770; with a design to revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice." And, in order that it might be known what they considered as the faith and practice of primitive christianity, six "Articles of Religion were proposed, agreed upon,

and signed:" not as a perfect creed of the new party; but principally as a declaration of their views on those points which had been the chief subjects of debate, between them and their former associates. These articles are thus expressed, in the original record.

[* At the head of the Minutes of the first Association, they were styled "an Assembly of Free-Grace General Baptists." This appellation was, at their formation, frequently given them, especially in London, to distinguish them from the Old churches of General Baptists: and, from finding it in this situation, it would seem that, though it has been long disused, they formerly recognized it. It is highly desirable, that some convenient designation could be adopted, that would distinguish things that differ.]

"ARTICLE 1. On the Fall of Man. We believe, that man was made upright in the image of God, free from all disorder natural and moral capable of obeying perfectly the will and command of God his Maker; yet capable also of sinning: which he unhappily did, and thereby laid himself under the divine curse; Which, we think, could include nothing less than the mortality of the body and the eternal punishment of the soul. His nature also became depraved; his mind was defiled; and the powers of his soul weakened--that both he was, and his posterity are, captives of Satan till set at liberty by Christ."

"ARTICLE 2. On the Nature and perpetual Obligation of the Moral Law. We believe, that the moral law not only extends to the outward actions of the life, but to all the powers and faculties of the mind, to every desire, temper and thought; that it demands the entire devotion of all the powers and faculties of both body and soul to God: or, in our Lord's words, to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength:--that this law is of perpetual duration and obligation, to all men, at all times, and in all places or parts of the world. And, we suppose that this law was obligatory to Adam in his perfect state--was more clearly revealed in the ten commandments--and more fully explained in many other parts of the bible."

"ARTICLE 3. On the Person and Work of Christ. We believe, that our Lord Jesus Christ is God and man, united in one person: or possessed of divine perfection united to human nature, in a way which we pretend not to explain, but think ourselves bound by the word of God firmly to believe:--that he suffered to make a full atonement for all the sins of all men--and that hereby he has wrought out for us a compleat salvation; which is received by, and as a free gift communicated to, all that believe in him; without the consideration of any works done by us, in order to entitle us to this salvation.--Though we firmly believe, that no faith is the means of justification, but that which produces good works."

"ARTICLE 4. On Salvation by Faith. We believe, that as this salvation is held forth to all to whom the gospel revelation comes without exception, we ought in the course of our ministry, to propose or offer this salvation to all those who attend our ministry: and, having opened to them their ruined wretched state by nature and practice, to invite all, without exception, to look to Christ by faith, without any regard to any thing in, or done by, themselves; that they may, in this way alone, that is, by faith, be possessed of this salvation."

"ARTICLE 5. On Regeneration by the Holy Spirit. We believe, that when (and not before) he is regenerated or renewed in his soul, by the spirit of God, through the instrumentality of the word, now believed and embraced; which renewal of his soul naturally produces holiness in heart and life:--that this holiness is the means of preparing us for the enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world; and of preserving in our souls a comfortable sense of our interest in the Lord, and of our title to glory; as well as to set a good example before men, and to recommend our blessed Redeemer's cause to the world."

"ARTICLE 6. On Baptism. We believe, that it is the indispensable duty of all who repent and believe the gospel, to be baptized, by immersion in water, in order to be initiated into a church state; and that no person ought to be received into the church without submission to that ordinance."

SIGNED,

Dan Taylor
David Wilkin
W. Thompson
John Knott
John Stanger
John Brittain
Henry Poole
William Smith
Geo. Hickling
John Tarratt
Robert French
N. Pickering
Charles Parman
W. Summers
Samuel Deacon
James Fenn
Francis Smith
Thomas Perkins
John Grimley

The persons who composed this assembly had long seen, with heart-felt regret, the mischiefs arising from a laxity of principle. They beheld the once flourishing interest of the general baptists languishing, and ready to expire; and they were persuaded, that the fatal cause of this affecting decline had been the neglect of what they esteemed the distinguishing doctrines of christianity, and the introduction of theories and speculations inconsistent with them. They, therefore, were anxious to guard the New Connection from those quicksands, which had nearly swallowed up their predecessors; and prefaced the above articles with this Resolution. "We agree, that no minister be permitted to join this assembly who does not subscribe the articles we have now agreed upon: and that those who do subscribe, and afterwards depart from them, shall be considered as no longer

belonging to this assembly." Under the same impressions, they wished to guard their churches, as well as the assembly, from the infection of false doctrine. They inquired, at the first association, "Is it not absolutely unscriptural and irregular for any member of this assembly to admit any person, who is not a member of this assembly, to preach for him, under any circumstances whatever?" But, zealous as they were for uniformity, many of them were so intimately connected with ministers of the old connection, that they objected to this undistinguishing exclusion; and, after considerable discussion, at this and the following association, it was at last left in these general terms. "We agree that we will endeavour, by all means, to have, at all times, when we have need of help, such as are agreed with us in sentiment."

But these fathers of the New Connection thought it necessary, in order that their hearts might be still more closely united, and their co-operation more cordial, that they should have full evidence, not only of the soundness of each other's faith, but of the genuineness of each other's piety. It was, therefore, agreed, at their first meeting, "that every minister do, at the next assembly, give an account of his religious experience, that they may be satisfied concerning the reality of each other's conversion."

The second association of the New Connection was held at London, May 22d. 23d. and 24th. 1771; and was attended by the same persons nearly as the former meeting. On the evening of the first day, Mr. W. Thompson preached, from Matt. 9:36-38: and, on the following evening, Mr. Donisthorpe, from John 3:36. A great part of the time, on this occasion, was occupied by the ministers, in relating their religious experience, according to the agreement of last year. If we may judge of the rest of these relations from the only one which has fallen under our notice, this must have been a very interesting and edifying opportunity. [The account which Mr. Francis Smith, of Melbourn, read to his brethren, on this occasion, is preserved in the Gen. Bap. Mag. Vol. I. pp. 263-267.]

Though the separation from the old connection had proceeded thus far, it appears, that the hope of a reunion was not entirely relinquished by either party. In November, 1770, W. Thompson had taken the "Six Articles of Religion," which had been subscribed at the formation of the New Connection, to a meeting of ministers, belonging to the Lincolnshire association, held at Coningsby. Those ministers, who continued desirous of an accommodation, agreed to send a copy of the Articles to each of their churches, for their consideration. At the next Lincolnshire association, the answers were received: and every church objected to some part or other of the Articles, and therefore refused to sign them. That assembly, however, requested Mr. Boyce to arrange and transcribe the various objections; to communicate them to the ensuing association of the New Connection, and to desire their answer. The exceptions were, accordingly presented to the second association at London: and Mr. D. Taylor was employed to draw up a short explanation of the Articles, by way of reply, and transmit it to Mr. Boyce. This he accordingly did; which, for that time, closed the correspondence.

But the principal business of the second association was, the division of the New Connection into two associations. It was considered, that some of the churches lying at a considerable distance from each other, the assembling annually, in one body, would be

attended with great expense of money and time. They agreed, therefore, for mutual convenience, to establish two associations: one in the north, and the other in the south. The former included the midland churches together with those in the counties of York and Lincoln: and the latter, those in London, Kent, Essex, and Surry; and it was proposed to keep up the connection, by sending a representative from one association to the other. The first meeting of the northern association was appointed to be held at Loughborough; and, of the southern at Besell's Green. But the southern societies soon laid aside their annual interviews the cause decayed, and several of the churches have long since disappeared.

The first northern association met, agreeably to the appointment, at Loughborough, June 3rd and 4th 1772; and was composed of the ministers and representatives of the churches at Loughborough, Kegworth, Barton, Melbourn, Longford, Boston, and Wadsworth. John Stanger and Samuel Bengel were likewise present, as the representatives of the southern association.

The seven churches just mentioned must be considered as forming the basis of the New Connection: Fleet Church having withdrawn from the union in the preceding year, and rejoined the Lincolnshire association. The number of members in these seven churches amounted, in 1772, to one thousand, two hundred and twenty-one.

The Connection, thus formed, has continued to increase in numbers and respectability. In order to place its history in a clear and connected view, we will endeavour to trace the proceedings of the different churches during the first fifteen years after its formation; and then to take a survey of the more public transactions of the whole body through the same period. A similar plan will conduct us through the succeeding periods, down to the present time.

SECT. 2.--The History of the General Baptist Churches in the Midland Counties, during the first Fifteen Years after the Commencement of the New Connection.

Barton, the original general baptist church in the midland counties, had, at the formation of the New Connection, suffered much from the unhappy fate of Mr. Whyatt. Occasion was given to the enemies of religion to blaspheme; and the harmony of the society was interrupted. Mr. Deacon, the only remaining pastor, was unable to occupy all the usual places of meeting; and many of them were either relinquished, or supplied with persons very unfit for the work. The cause, therefore, began evidently to decline; but it pleased God to send them unexpected help. Mr. John Yates, of Hugglescote, who had formerly been one of their members, had, some time previous to this date, joined the particular baptist church at Sheepshead: and was called to preach, occasionally, by that society. Not being perfectly satisfied, whoever, with his new connection, he returned, in 1772, to his old friends at Barton. They received him gladly; and immediately employed him in the work of the ministry. His labours were acceptable and useful, and he was ordained co pastor with Mr. Deacon. The ministers cordially united in building the walls of Zion; and the drooping cause rapidly revived. But the hopes of the friends of the truth were painfully disappointed, and the bright prospect suddenly clouded. Mr. Yates, their

beloved pastor, died, Dec. 10th 1773, in the thirty-sixth year of his age; leaving a pregnant widow, and five small children, to mourn his premature removal.

This affecting dispensation of divine Providence plunged the church again into a darkness and difficulty. Though the neighbours kindly assisted Mr. Deacon, as often as circumstances permitted, in supplying the numerous places at which public worship was established; yet, distance of place, and numerous other causes, rendered their visits precarious, and gave rise to frequent disappointments. Anxious to obtain amore regular supply, they turned their attention to Mr. Benjamin Wootton, a promising young minister in Kegworth church. But, though they used every proper means to obtain him, and though the association, in 1777, recommended his move to Barton; yet the friends at Kegworth refused to part with him. This disappointment was very sensibly felt, as, at the same time, differences in sentiment, and disorder in practice, hindered the peace of the church; and prevented the prosperity of the cause of the Redeemer.

During these gloomy days, several of the thoughtful members endeavoured apply those places for which preachers could not be obtained by prayer meetings. These were, in general, well attended, and conducted with propriety. they not only supplied useful opportunities, but had a happy tendency to discover and cultivate useful gifts. Several young men were thus brought into notice, who afterwards became acceptable ministers in various parts of the connection. Among others, Mr. S. Deacon, jun., the eldest son of their pastor, was induced to assist in these meetings for prayer, and was favourably received. His friends soon encouraged him to attempt to preach, and so highly approved his labours, that they unanimously invited him to share the pastoral-office with his respected father. He was ordained, in 1779. This event had a pleasing effect on the state of religion in the church. The divisions and jealousies, that had distracted the society ever since Mr. Whyatt's exclusion, subsided; and the members and pastors laboured together with great harmony, in spreading the gospel of the glorious Redeemer among perishing sinners.

Towards the close of this period, Mr. John Deacon, a younger son of their pastor, commenced preacher, and was frequently employed till he settled at Leicester. Mr. Thomas Orton, now of Hugglescote, Mr. Brewin, who laboured for this church as an assistant minister, and several others, began also to exercise their gifts in preaching. Yet, with all these means, the cause remained almost stationary. Many of their old and most respectable members died, and others did not arise in their places, In 1785 they complain that "the state of religion was low, especially in some, though they hoped that others were firm in the faith:--that they were much reduced in earthly things; having very few who had any thing more than necessities."

The number of members then amounted to one hundred and thirty-nine.

The church at Melbourn continued, through the whole of this period, to flourish, under the joint pastoral care of Messrs. Francis Smith an Thomas Perkins; who generally laboured alternately at Melbourn and Packington, the two principal stations. But preaching was regularly maintained at a number of other places, which increased as the cause spread; and required the assistance of other labourers. Several young men of

respectable abilities, were raised up in their own church, whose services were both acceptable and useful. Among these were, Thomas Mee, of Packington, who was called to the ministry in 1777, and was frequently employed among them for eighteen years; John Smedley, who commenced preaching in 1782, and continued his labours, in various parts of the church, till he settled at Retford, in 1794; and Job Burditt, of whom we shall have to speak on another occasion.

Being thus plentifully supplied with ministers, the cause regularly extended itself. The congregation at Melbourn increased, till it was convenient, in 1782, to raise the walls of the meeting house, and erect galleries. This alteration cost ninety pounds, which they liberally raised by subscription among themselves. The number of members nearly doubled during this period; amounting, in 1785, to three hundred and five.

Among other places, to which the friends at Melbourn carried the gospel, was Cauldwell, a pleasant, though small village, on the confines of Staffordshire, four miles from Burton upon Trent and twelve from Litchfield. Joseph Norton, an inhabitant of this place, was induced to hear the general baptist ministers, at Packington. His mind was affected with the great truths which he heard: and he was convicted of his lost state by nature. After some time, he obtained peace in believing; was baptized, and joined the church at Melbourn. It appears, that, when he set out in the ways of religion, though he was a married man, and had several young children, yet he dwelt with his father, who was a person of some property, and was in a great measure dependant on him. This gentleman had imbibed strong prejudices against the Melbourn preachers; and frequently called them "false prophets, and a paltry set of hirelings who ran before they were sent." He, therefore, violently opposed his son's connection with persons whom he both despised and hated: and threatened, if he did not forsake them, to turn him and his infant family out of doors. But his threats made this sincere christian cleave to his Saviour, and pursue the one thing needful with greater ardour. He persevered in a constant attendance on the means of grace at Melbourn and Packington; though the former was twelve, and the latter nine miles from the place of his residence.

As his knowledge of the gospel, and his enjoyment of its blessings increased, his desire that his neighbours, and his relatives, should partake of the same mercies, proportionably augmented. He laboured strenuously to engage his acquaintance to accompany him to Melbourn and Packington: and, sometimes, with such success that he has taken twenty companions, at once, to hear the gospel; many of whom found it the power of God to the salvation of their souls. But it required more address to remove the prejudices of his father; yet the filial piety of the son caused him to feel peculiarly anxious for the eternal happiness of his parent. He, therefore, determined, in dependance on the divine blessing, to make the attempt. Knowing the prepossessions of his father against the Melbourn preachers, he thought it more prudent to procure a stranger to commence the operations; and engaged Mr. Abraham Austin, of Sutton Colefield, to preach at Cauldwell, when a door of entrance should be opened. Mr. Norton, then, having concealed his plan with one of his friends, informed his father that Mr. Austin proposed visiting him, on such a day, and might perhaps be prevailed on to preach, if a proper place could be found;--but that, fearing his father might not be prepared to receive him, or might be afraid of the

reflections of his neighbours, he had applied to another person in the village, who was very willing that the service should be held at his house. This address had the desired effect. It roused the pride of the old man, who, as he occupied his own estate, affected to act with great spirit, and was piqued that any of his neighbours should be thought more independent than himself. He immediately replied, "Mr. Austin shall preach in my house." Notice was accordingly given: Mr. Austin came; and preached to a numerous and attentive congregation. His father was well pleased with the service; and frequently observed afterwards, that it was a good discourse.

Mr. Norton was encouraged by his father's approval of this sermon: and assured him that the ministers at Melbourn, of whom he entertained so bad an opinion, preached exactly the same doctrines as Mr. Austin. At length, the old gentleman expressed a willingness to hear them; and authorized his son to invite them to Cauldwell. Messrs. Smith and Perkins eagerly accepted the invitation: and, without waiting for much solicitation, repeated their visits. In a short time, Mr. Norton had the heart-felt satisfaction of seeing his venerable parent lay aside his prejudices, and submit to the truth. He was baptized, and joined the church at Melbourn. Several of his neighbours following his example, public worship was established in the village, and a room licensed for that purpose. At first, the service was only once a fortnight, on the Thursday evening; but the prospect continuing to improve, preaching, was commenced regularly every Lord's-day. Notwithstanding considerable opposition, the cause gained ground, and the hearers increased; till the room which they had hired became too small to accommodate them. A meeting-house, therefore, became necessary: and Mr. Norton, sen. who was now zealous to support the faith which he so lately wished to destroy, generously gave them a piece of land for a meeting-house and burying-ground. The friends exerted themselves liberally on the occasion; and a commodious meeting-house was erected, at an expence of one hundred and eighty pounds, which was opened in 1778.

The success of the gospel at Cauldwell alarmed its enemies. A Spirit of persecution arose against the baptists; the chief weight of which fell on Mr. Joseph Norton, who was considered as the chief ringleader of the sect. He was stigmatized as "a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, and a disturber of the tranquillity of a peaceful village." Not content with these harmless effusions of spite, which the good man would have smiled at and forgiven, they endeavoured to injure him in his temporal concerns. He was a shoe-maker: and, in order to deprive him of the means of procuring an honest subsistence, they encouraged another of the same trade to settle in the village. Mr. Norton, however, continued to pursue the great objects in which he had engaged with undiminished ardor: but, while he was earnestly labouring to spread the knowledge of the gospel, he was peculiarly diligent, obliging, punctual and honest in his worldly business. The blessing of Him, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, succeeded his endeavours: and, in a short time, his opponent was obliged to retreat with loss and disgrace. Several of his christian friends endured similar persecution; but all was overruled by a gracious Providence, even to their temporal advantage. They found, by blessed experience, that "godliness is profitable for all things; having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come."

About two years after the opening of the new meeting-house, Job Burditt, a native of Cauldwell, a young man of promising abilities was called to the work of the ministry. His labours were so highly approved by his neighbours, that he became, in a great measure, the regular preacher in that branch of the church. The cause increased under his ministrations: and, in 1785, forty of the inhabitants of Cauldwell and its neighbourhood stood as members of the society at Melbourn.

The church at Kegworth, under Messrs. Nathaniel Pickering and John Tarratt, received considerable additions soon after the formation of the New Connection. The increase of the cause rendered more labourers necessary: and, in 1771, Benjamin Wootton, one of their members, was called to the work of the ministry. He was a promising young man; sober-minded, thoughtful, and fond of reading. His ministry was acceptable and the congregation was much attached to him. In 1775, another young member, William Corah, was encouraged to preach. He was a person of very different character: His mind was uncultivated, and he had no taste for study, nor even for general reading. His discourses were remarkable for evangelical doctrine, simplicity of idea, and homeliness of expression; but they often reached the hearts and consciences of the hearers with amazing power.* About the time that Mr. Corah commenced his labours, preaching was introduced into Belton, a place five miles north-west of Kegworth; and, in the following year, a dwelling-house was licensed for the purpose at Thurgaton, another neighbouring village.

[* Of this, a worthy minister, to whose friendship we are indebted for many of the particulars in this account gives the following instance, "When about seventeen years of age, I was attentively bearing Mr. Corah. In his sermon, he quoted John 3:16, 'God so loved the world,' &c.-- 'God so loved the world,' said he. How much?--This little word SO--Ye canna fathom it.' I have heard many able preachers, many excellent sermons, and striking remarks; but none was ever so blessed to me as this. It led to a train of meditations on the greatness of the love of God, which, it is hoped, as a means, made it answer the end of its manifestation."]

For several succeeding years, the cause was carried on by the pastors, ministers, and people, with great energy and success. The public services were well attended; and many joined themselves to the church: so that, in 1781, the members amounted to two hundred and eighty-two, and the church was harmonious. But, in the following year, this harmony was interrupted, and the progress of the gospel received a deplorable check. Mr. Wootton, who was naturally disposed to speculate, had indulged this disposition so far, as to embrace some tenets favouring the socinian system. This change of sentiment discovered itself in his public discourses, and caused no small uneasiness among his friends. A day was appointed for the investigation of the unpleasant business:--but, though my neighbouring ministers had been invited to assist the church, on this occasion, nothing effectual was done. The alarm increased: the society was again assembled to deliberate on this subject; and Mr. Dan Taylor was sent for to assist them. This discussion proved final. Mr. Wootton's views were fairly developed, and their pernicious tendency exposed: his arguments were refuted, and objections answered. The people convinced that he ought not to be encouraged; and withdrew their fellowship from him. Seventeen

members adhered to him; among whom were two or three officers and trustees of the meeting-house. This circumstance occasioned considerable trouble for some years: but, by these proceedings, the church was purged from such speculations; and has never since been infested with them.

Mr. Wootton, after the separation, attempted to preach, for a short time; but his followers dwindled away and, though he maintained an excellent moral character, through a long life, yet he could not succeed in forming a party.

In this year, Mr. John Goddard, who resided at Little Hallam, was called, by his brethren, to the work of the ministry. He was a youth of good natural abilities: his preaching was very acceptable, and attended with considerable success. The following year, a new meeting-house was opened at Sawley; chiefly through the liberality of two worthy individuals: Mr. Joseph Parkinson, of that place, devoting a building of his own to the purpose; and Mr. John Stenson, at his private expence, furnishing it with seats. Mr. Tarratt preached the first sermon in it, in the autumn of 1783. About the same time, the ministers of this church commenced preaching, once a fortnight, at Hathern: and, in a few months afterwards, established regular meetings at Sutton Bonington, a village two miles east of Kegworth; where numbers attended, and heard with profit.

In 1784, the meeting-house at Little Hallam was taken down, and a more substantial and commodious one erected, in its stead, at Ilkiston; a considerable town a mile northward of the former place. The ground on which the old building stood was not the property of the church, and the situation was very ineligible. The removal, therefore, was thought necessary; and experience has shewn, that it has conduced much to the prosperity of religion in that neighbourhood.

This society had now spread over many towns and villages: from Sawley on the north, to Belton on the south, was a distance of twenty miles. Though the extent of the cause furnished ground for gratitude, yet. it was productive of much inconvenience in transacting the business of the society. Many of the members were obliged to travel twenty or thirty miles in the day, to enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary. And., though the Lord's supper was administered and church meetings held, monthly, Many of these zealous Christians cheerfully supported this fatigue and were punctual in their attendance. But Mr. Goddard residing in Derbyshire, and being well approved by the friends in that neighbourhood, suggested the propriety of dividing this large society into distinct and independent churches. This subject was taken seriously into consideration, early in 1785. The chief difficulty arose from the heavy debt which remained on the meeting-house at Ilkiston. But, considering, the weakness of the interest in that place, the other branches of the society generously took the greatest part of the burden on themselves. The business was, therefore, brought to a final arrangement: and, May 22nd. 1785, a friendly separation was completed. The societies which arose from this division, were, Ilkiston church, including Smalley, which consisted of fifty members, under the care of Mr. Goddard; Castle-Donington church, including Sawley, which consisted of seventy members, under the care of Mr. N. Pickering: and Kegworth., which comprehended Kegworth, Diseworth, Belton, Long Whatton, and Sutton Bonington; and consisted of

one hundred and nine members, with whom Mr. John Tarratt remained as pastor, and Mr. Corah as assistant minister. [The number of members in these churches is copied from the Minutes of the succeeding Association, in 1786 and, therefore, may not, probably, exhibit the exact state of each at the period of separation.]

At Loughborough, [Supra, pp. 53 and 54] Messrs. Grimley and Donisthorpe continued to preach the gospel, and superintend the church with unabated zeal and success. The cause prospered in their hands:-- numbers joining the society in the places where regular preaching was established; and new doors, for usefulness, from time to time, opening before them. But, in the midst of these flattering prospects, the cause sustained a heavy loss by the death of Mr. Donisthorpe. This active servant of Christ had often expressed, to his intimate friends, a wish that he might die preaching the gospel: and his request was, in a good degree, granted. On the last Tuesday in May, 1774, he went to deliver an evening lecture at the meeting-house in Loughborough: when, having prayed with his usual fervour, he proceeded to give out a hymn. While he read the two first lines, his voice faltered, and he sunk into the pulpit.* His friends instantly went up to his assistance, and conveyed him to a neighbouring house. Intelligence was sent, without delay, to his family; but before any of them arrived he was speechless. He was taken home in a chaise, and medical advice procured: but all efforts were ineffectual. After lying in a state of insensibility till the following Tuesday evening, he expired, in the seventy-second year of his age.

[* The two lines, with which this minister closed his labours in the church militant, were these:

"The land of triumph lies on high;
"There are no fields of battle there!"]

This stroke was heavy, and the loss great: but it was, in some good measure, repaired by the labours of Richard Thurman, who, about this time, began to exercise in prayer and expounding the scriptures, at the private meetings; and was, soon afterwards, encouraged by his brethren to preach in public. Thus they were enabled to continue regular services at the different places; and Mr. Grimley was, by his age and experience, well qualified to discharge the duties of the pastoral office, which now, wholly devolved on him. In a few years, the Lord of the harvest sent other labourers into this part of the vineyard. Mr. Pollard, of Swithland, was discovered to possess ministerial abilities; and, in March, 1779, was, after satisfactory previous trial, requested to employ them for the advantage of the church. With this request he complied; and his labours were acceptable and useful.

The year following was distinguished by a revival in various parts of this extended church, particularly at Quorndon, and the neighbouring villages. Upwards of one hundred at once professed their faith in Christ, and obedience to him, by offering themselves as candidates for baptism and fellowship. A few of these afterwards turned back to the world; many of them, there is good reason to believe, have joined the church above; and several remain, to the present day, ornaments to the church below. Among these, we may reckon Mr. Robert Smith, now of Nottingham. About the same time, Mr. Joseph

Freeston, a schoolmaster at Grimston, who had lost his situation for refusing to teach the catechism of the church of England, was kindly patronized by Mr. Hutchinson, of Loughborough. He took Mr. Freeston into his house, and furnished him with a convenient room for a school, which he conducted with great success. Messrs. Smith and Freeston were called to the ministry in the year 1780; and their assistance strengthened the hands of their brethren, and promoted the success of the cause. The church at Loughborough, at this flourishing season, was not only liberally supplied with the means of grace itself; but occasionally assisted Nottingham, Kirkby-Woodhouse and Ashford; as all these churches were, at that time, destitute of ministers.

About the same time, Mr. Thomas Simpson, a member of this society, who resided at Rothley, began to attempt to preach to his neighbours. Though these attempts were not sanctioned by the church, they opened a door for the introduction of the gospel into that village, of which the zealous ministers at Loughborough did not fail to avail themselves. They commenced their labours there in a decayed old barn; and were often obliged to remove from place to place; yet their efforts were successful, and the cause took deep root in this neighbourhood.

Edward Johnson, a worthy general baptist, and a member of the same church, had been turned out of a profitable farm at Swithland, on account of his religion; and had settled at Woodhouse-Eaves, a village about three miles south of Loughborough. Not deterred by the persecution which he had already suffered, he cheerfully opened his house, in 1780, for the preaching of the gospel. Many attended; and a foundation was laid, on which a separate interest has since been raised.

By the progressive spread of the cause, and the accession of members from various places, this church had now become inconveniently large. The distance of members from each other, rendered it extremely difficult to meet together at the Lord's table, or for purposes of discipline: the ministers were subjected to great toil in taking such extensive circuits, to attend the Lord's-days' and evening services at places so far separated from each other: the expences incurred by these journeys were a heavy burden on the funds of the church: and it was found impossible for one pastor to exercise a proper vigilance over so numerous and scattered a people. All these considerations evinced the necessity of dividing this large society; which was carried into effect, in 1782. Two independent churches were then formed: the one including Loughborough and the neighbouring villages; the other comprising Leake and Wimeswould, with the places in their vicinity. The former, at the time of the division consisted of two hundred and ninety members and the latter, of one hundred and fifty-four.*--Mr. Grimley continued pastor over Loughborough church; and Mr. Richard Thurman was ordained to the same office over the church at Leake.

[* The numbers here differ a little from the statement in G. B. R. Vol. II. p. 8; but as this account is taken from the Minutes of the Association in 1783, which probably were not in the possession of the writer in the G. B. R., it is presumed to be more accurate.]

After this separation, the ministers at Loughborough continued their labours, with increasing vigour. The old barns at Rothley soon became too small for the accommodation of the numbers who crowded to hear the words of life. A new built and capacious barn was, therefore, hired for twelve years; fitted up in a comfortable manner; and opened, Nov. 20th. 1785. At that time, this church consisted of two hundred and seventy-nine members; maintained preaching regularly at four places; were tolerably well attended with hearers; and a few waiting for baptism. But they lament the fewness of those who gave evidence of real conversion, and the low degree of love and zeal which appeared in too many of the members.

The church at Leake, when it divided from Loughborough, maintained regular preaching at Leake, Wimeswould and Widmerpool: and soon afterwards carried the gospel into Broughton; where, at the close of this period, they preached once a fortnight. The preachers had early penetrated into these parts, as we have already seen; and a meeting-house had been erected at Leake in 1756. [Supra, pp. 36-39.] At Wimeswould, after preaching a considerable time in private houses, a meetinghouse was opened, in 1781. The blessing of the great Head of the church succeeded the efforts of his servants. Several were added to the church by baptism, during the first years of its existence as a distinct church; but, from various causes, nearly as many were lost from the society: so that, in 1785, the members amounted to one hundred and fifty-nine; when they hoped that religion was on the advance.

During this period, the attention of the ministers at Loughborough was drawn to Leicester. There had existed a general baptist church in that city, for more than a century previous to the formation of the New Connection. [Vol. I. pp. 160, 237.] It was then almost extinct. A few scattered persons, indeed, remained, who professed themselves members of it: but, it is probable, the society would have been entirely dissolved, had not an endowment preserved the shadow of a church. An infirm old man, of the name of Green, who lived at Earl-Shilton, then enjoyed the property, as nominal elder: and preached five or six times a year to the few who chose to hear him.

Such had, for a long time, been the state of things, when, in 1781, a family of the name of brothers, the heads of which were members of the church at Loughborough, went to reside at Leicester. Some months after their removal, one of their children died: and, as it was unbaptized, it could not be interred in the church-yard. They sent, therefore, a request to their own minister to come over, and assist at the funeral, in the burying-ground belonging to the old general baptists. By the advice of Mr. Grimley, Mr. B. Pollard went; and preached on the occasion to the friends of the deceased, and a few of those the relatives had invited to attend. After the funeral, they supped with the mourning family; and some close conversation took place respecting the state of the church and of vital religion in their own hearts. In the course of the evening, one of the members of the original church addressed Mr. Pollard with great earnestness, in the affecting terms:

"Young man, we are six of us now with you; and we are all apostates." Roused to a sense of the danger of their condition, they united in wishing for a revival, both in their own souls, and in the venerable society to which they belonged; and believing that such

preaching as they had just heard would be the most likely means, under the blessing of God, to produce such a desirable change; they joined in requesting that the New Connection would supply them with preachers.

This request was laid before the ministers of the adjacent churches: and though these zealous men had made an ineffectual attempt, a few years before, to introduce their interest into Leicester, they embraced with pleasure this unexpected opening. A regular supply was therefore arranged, which furnished alternatively by the churches at Barton and Loughborough. Their labours were attended with encouraging success. A decent congregation was collected; and several of the nominal members became earnest in attending to the things which made for their eternal happiness.

In a short time after regular preaching had been established at Leicester, Mr. J. Deacon, who had been some time preparing for the ministry, under Mr. D. Taylor, returned to his native county. As he was an acceptable preacher, and more at liberty than many of the other ministers, he frequently supplied Leicester. The people formed a strong attachment to him, and began to wish to enjoy his labours more constantly. In order to this, fourteen of the members who had formerly belonged to this society, re-established their church, Sept. 1782 and invited Mr. Deacon to preach for them. To this he consented: and a remarkable alteration soon appeared. In the course of the following year, twenty-four persons were added to the church by baptism, and ten were received from other churches. Their number, therefore, amounted to forty-eight, in June 1783; when they were admitted into the New Connection. At that time, nine persons were waiting for admission, the public services were well attended and frequently crowded, and good effects appeared to have been produced by preaching in the country places around Leicester.

This revival of the cause rendered the old meeting-house too little to accommodate the increasing congregation; and they exerted themselves zealously in erecting a new and spacious building, which they completed in 1785; when their members had increased to seventy-five, and religion appeared on the advance.

We have very little information respecting the remaining branch of the original division: the small church at Kirkby-Woodhouse. It joined the New Connection in 1773, when Mr. John Alvery, who seems to have sustained the office of ruling elder, attended, as its representative, at the association. The members then were thirty-one; and they complain of "standing in need of a stated ministry." The reason for this complaint continued throughout the period under review: and they depended on the occasional assistance of surrounding churches. Distance of situation rendered this mode of supply very uncertain, and inadequate to the prosperity of the cause. The church felt the effects of its destitute situation, and gradually declined. In 1783, they informed the association,--that there were only twenty-one members--that it was feared several of them were in a "very poor state"--and that they had reason to complain of formality, and of enjoying no prospect of addition to their number. This discouraging account concludes our notice of this society in the present section.

At the commencement of the New Connection, the general baptists at Hinkley and Longford formed but one church. It was served by Messrs. W. Smith and George Hickling; two acceptable and successful ministers: the latter especially acquired a considerable degree of popularity, both among his own friends, and in other branches of the connection. The cause had prospered much under their care, that the members, which, in 1766, amounted only to fifty, had, in 1772, increased to one hundred and eighty-four. At that time, the propriety of a friendly division became a subject of serious deliberation. The principal difficulty arose from the partiality of both parties for Mr. Hickling. But, as there were two or three judicious and pious members at Hinckley, who had begun to be useful in conducting meetings, it was at length settled, with mutual approbation, that Mr. Hickling should remain at Longford; and that Mr. Smith should remove to Hinckley, to take the oversight of the church in that neighbourhood. The separation was solemnly effected, Feb. 2nd. 1773; when every member was left at liberty to Join which party he pleased.

Seventy members remained, after this arrangement, to form the distinct church at Hinckley, which were scattered over a large tract of country; including Hinckley, Wolvey, Burbage, Burton, Brancote, Farl-Shilton, Righton, and Dunton. The cause continued to prosper; and, in a few months after the separation, twelve were added to the church by baptism. In 1774, the ministers extended their labours to Witheybrook, a village two miles beyond Wolvey; where Mr. Robert Compton, a worthy member of this society, licensed his house to receive them. The success was encouraging; and the door then opened has never yet been closed.

In 1778, they were providentially enabled to introduce the gospel, into Thurlaston, a village six miles east of Hinckley. Mr. Edward Parkinson, having removed from Castle Donington, and settled at Thurlaston, became a member of the church at Hinckley. His brother, Thomas Parkinson, of Quorndon, was a deacon of Loughborough church. Mr. B. Pollard, a young preacher in the latter society, was engaged to preach, on the Lord's-day, for the friends at Hinckley: and, being a stranger in those parts, Mr. T. Parkinson kindly undertook to accompany him. They called, to spend the Saturday evening, at his brother's, at Thurlaston. In the course of conversation, it was remarked, that the gospel had never been preached in that village in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. Mr. Thomas Parkinson immediately proposed, that Mr. Pollard should preach that evening, in his brother's house. The proposal was cheerfully accepted; and notice given to the neighbours. A number attended; and heard with seriousness and approbation. A desire to hear again was evidently excited. Mr. F. Parkinson, therefore, licensed his house: and the ministers from Hinckley, and other adjacent churches, cheerfully engaged to supply it. The cause took deep root: and in a short, several of the inhabitants of this dark place were baptized, and added to the church.

Thus, under the divine blessing on the zealous exertions of his servants, the truth gradually spread. Their plain, faithful, and unadorned discourses were delivered with energy, and attended with success. The peculiar and important doctrines of christianity were clearly stated, and constantly insisted on: and Christ, and him crucified, became the wisdom of God, and the power of God, to the salvation of many precious souls in the

villages round Hinckley. But, it is painful to add, that, in the town itself, the prospect was less encouraging; and that, towards the close of this period, considerable trouble and in the internal concerns of the church, the hearts of the friends of religion, and prevented the progress of the truth. In 1785, the members amounted to ninety-one.

In the year 1770, there was an independent society at Salton Coldfield, a town in Warwickshire, about ten Miles north-east of Birmingham. Mr. Abraham Austin was a promising young member of this small church, and was highly esteemed by his brethren. In June that year, the pastor being absent, and the pulpit unprovided for, his friends prevailed on him to fill up the vacancy, by attending to preach. This attempt gave great satisfaction to his auditors; and he was afterwards frequently employed. In a short time, a dispute arose in the church on some point of doctrine, and a division ensued. Mr. Austin approving the opinion of the seceders, they formed a separate interest. They licensed a room in the town, which they fitted up for public worship. Here Mr. Austin preached, and many of the congregation among which he, had, previously laboured, followed him. The hearers increased rapidly, and the room soon became too small to accommodate them. This obliged them to look out for a more capacious place; and they soon found a piece of ground, with an erection on it, that suited their purpose. This they purchased for eighty pounds; and fitted up the building as a meeting-house. This, probably, took place about 1774.

Some time previous to this event, two of the members of the general baptist church at Longford, having occasion to pass through Satton-Coldfield, enquired whether there were any dissenters in the town. They were directed to Mr. Austin and obtained an interview with him. They were highly pleased to discover, from his conversation, that, on the most important doctrines, his sentiments coincided with their own. But, when the subject of believers' baptism was introduced, he acknowledged that it had never engaged his thoughts. The travellers requested him to turn his attention to the subject; and proceeded on their journey. On their return to Longford, they communicated to their friends the pleasure which they had enjoyed in their interview with these professors; and the good opinion which they entertained of their character and sentiments. This induced Mr. Hickling, their pastors, and several of his friends, to go over and spend a Lord's-day at Sutton. An increasing intimacy was thus cultivated; and the result was, that these people were encouraged to examine the scripture for themselves, and form their own judgments on its contents. Mr. Austin paid several visits to the general baptist churches, especially to Melbourn: his mind soon became convinced of the divine appointment of believers' baptism, and he was baptized at Melbourn. Many of his hearers having embraced the same sentiments, Mr. F. Smith, of Melbourn, went over to Sutton Coldfield, baptized sixteen of them, and formed them into a regular general baptist church. They called Mr. Austin to minister to them in holy things; but he was never ordained to the pastoral office over that society. Others soon joined them; so that, in 1776, their number amounted to forty-two. They then alternately at Sutton and Birmingham, and were, in general, lively and happy.

In June, 1775, Mr. Austin attended the association at Hinckley and applied for admission into the New Connection. After having declared his faith and fundamental doctrines, the

matter was referred to the churches, and the decision postponed to the following year; when they were unanimously received.. Mr. Austin then laid the particulars of the purchase of the meeting-house before the association, and requested assistance in, liquidating the debt.

For several years, the cause continued to flourish. The congregations were large, and additions frequent; and, to use their own language, repeated for three or four successive years, the church was "united, lively, and happy." In 1781. they opened a place, for public worship, at Bloxwich; where they preached once a fortnight, and were well attended with hearers. At some following associations, they complain of coldness and indifference to the things of God in too many of their members; and, in 1784, they say, "We have had some trouble, and expect more." Whether this trouble was connected with the following events, we are not informed: but, in 1785, it appears, that, finding themselves unable to raise a sufficient supply for the temporal wants of their minister, they applied to the association for advice and assistance. That meeting recommended it to Mr. Austin "to turn his mind to some way of business;" and a few of the churches expressed their willingness to lend assistance to the friends at Sutton. Things could not, however, be satisfactorily arranged. Mr. Austin left them, and settled in London; where, for more than thirty years, he honourably and usefully presided over the baptist church in Fetter-lane. At his departure, the church consisted of fifty-nine members, who were tolerably united.

Our information respecting the church at Longford, after its separation from Hinckley, is very general. It consisted, in 1773, of one pastor, two deacons, one hundred and twelve members. Soon afterwards, Mr. Samuel Catterns was chosen to the office of ruling elder; and the number of deacons increased to four. For several years, the cause continued to prosper; and Mr. Hickling's reputation to spread. In 1775, no fewer than thirty persons were added to the church by baptism. The number of hearers that crowded to their public services made more commodious place of worship very desirable; and means were adopted to obtain one. In 1777, they established preaching every Lord's-day, at Coventry; and, for a time, there appeared an encouraging prospect of success. But the removal of some persons who countenanced the attempt, and the subsequent confusion in the society at Longford, rendered this undertaking abortive. The following year, the church experienced no little trouble, from several of their members embracing the tenets of the calvinists and methodists; and thirteen were excluded. A short interval of peace succeeded: but, in 1784, some irregularities in the conduct of Mr. Hickling led to a separation between him and the church. This unhappy event gave a check to the progress of the cause in that place; from which it has never recovered. In 1785, the members amounted to one hundred and thirty-two, who say, "If we had a minister there is great probability that good would be done; but, if we have not one settled among us, we fear that the cause will dwindle away."

Soon after the separation from Hinckley, the ministers at Longford were led to extend their labours to Harbury,* a village in Warwickshire, distant about twenty miles southward. Here, several, embracing the truth, joined Longford church; and a meeting-house was erected. But the distance of situation rendering communion with the parent society difficult, they were formed, in 1775, into a distinct church, consisting of eighteen

members. Mr. John Hill, one of their number, "who sometimes expounded among them," was elected ruling elder; and they were favoured with the labours of their former pastor, Mr. Hickling; who, for some time, visited them once a fortnight. But standing alone, and at a distance from any of their sister churches, they could not receive adequate support; and the cause declined. In 1779, Mr. Hill attended the association at Longford, as the representative of this church; when he reported, that, "religion was in a low state." The cause continued to, droop; till, before the year 1783, it became extinct: and the meeting-house was sold to the Methodists.

[* The circumstances that led to the introduction of these ministers into Harbury were rather singular. S. Ashby, the young woman whom we have already mentioned as the first general baptist in the neighbourhood of Longford, paid a visit to a relation at Ladbroke, a village near Harbury. In the course of conversation, she brought forward some serious topics; and was pained to observe that they excited disgust in her relative. After some time, he returned the visit; but, unwilling to displease him, she avoided all allusion to religion. Staying till the next day, he was awakened during the night, by the voice of his relative, who slept in an adjoining apartment, and seemed in earnest discourse. He soon discovered that she was talking in her sleep; and curiosity led him to listen. His surprise may be easily conceived, when he heard her discussing the same important subjects in her sleep which had engaged their waking attention, in her previous visit to Ladbroke. Though then disgusted, he was now so struck with the energy of her manner, the force of her arguments, and the pertinency of the texts of scripture which she brought to support her doctrines, that he resolved on a serious inquiry, and determined to hear the preachers for himself. This he did: and his prejudices being removed, he embraced the truth, and became anxious that his neighbours also should hear the joyful sound. On his return to Ladbroke, he invited Mr. Hickling to come and preach in the neighbourhood. The invitation was accepted: Mr. Hickling repeated his visit; and the result was, the formation of the temporary interest at Harbury. J. D. MSS.]

During the period of which we are treating the church at Nottingham joined the New Connection. In the year 1773, William Fox, who had formerly been a member of Kirkby-Woodhouse church, settled at Little Hallam, and removed his, communion to Kegworth church. He had made some attempts at preaching, and was allowed to possess abilities for the sacred work: but he was unsteady in his disposition, and not sufficiently circumspect in his conduct. Being more under the inspection of the ministers at Hallam, his character appeared to improve, and he was encouraged to preach: at first, only occasionally, but afterwards more regularly. After residing two years at Hallam, he removed to Nottingham. Here he licensed his dwelling-house; in which he commenced public worship. In a short time, a few of his hearers were affected with the truths which he preached; and, in May 1775, six persons were baptized, on a profession of faith in Christ. [The names of these first converts, who may be considered as the founders of the general baptist interest at Nottingham, were, Nathan Hurst, Jonathan Oldham, Joseph Fowler, Mary Fowler, Mary Shelton and Catharine Atkinson; and the two who joined them from other churches were William Taylor and Ann Freeman. G.B.R. Vol. II. p. 50.] Two others joining them, from neighbouring churches, they were formed into a distinct society; which, with W. Fox and his wife, consisted of ten members. The cause assumed an

encouraging aspect and in the course of the next year, the members increased to thirty. William Fox was ordained pastor over this infant church, by Messrs. Grimley F. Smith, and J. Tarratt. Mr. Fox was ordained in their usual place of worship—a garret in his own house. But, encouraged by the success of these weak attempts, they determined to build a more commodious meeting-house; and actually purchased a piece of the ground for that purpose.

But these bright prospects were soon overcast. The conduct of their minister became irregular and disgraceful. He was repeatedly seen in a state of intoxication: and, having been often admonished and reproofed in vain, he was, at last, excluded from the church. The effects of this event were inexpressibly mischievous to the infant cause. Most of the hearers forsook their meetings: several of the members withdrew: the enemies of the truth took occasion to blaspheme: and the name of this apostate became, for many years afterwards, a term of reproach in the mouths of the profane, which they applied, with impious exultation, to all the professors of religion. Did ministers of the gospel reflect on the dreadful effects which their sins, and even their improprieties, produce, it would excite in their minds a holy jealousy over their conduct, and make them earnest in prayer for grace to resist the first appearance of evil.

For several years after this awful stroke, the few friends who adhered to the cause in Nottingham, procured assistance from the neighbouring churches. The ministers from Melbourn, Donington, and Loughborough supplied alternately with John Hallam, one of their members, who appears to have preached with some degree of acceptance for several years. But the interest had sunk so low, that the preachers often travelled twenty miles, and found scarcely twenty hearers. For a long time, they continued their exertions with laudable perseverance; but at length, seeing no fruit of their labours, they began to deliberate on the propriety of declining any further endeavours. On this occasion, Mr. Thurman encouraged them to proceed. "We have cast," said he, "our bread on the waters; we have sown the seed: who can tell but the harvest time is near, when we shall reap, if we faint not?" Animated by this exhortation, the ministers continued their visits. They soon had the satisfaction of seeing the cause in some degree revive; and several additions made to their number. The member of Mr. Thurman is, to this day, dear to the friends at Nottingham, for this salutary advice: which has always been esteemed a principal cause, under the divine blessing, of the present existence of their church.

In the year 1779, they hired a large room in Jack-Knutter's-lane, for a place of worship. In this they preached to a few hearers, and were little known to their neighbours. But, about this time, a circumstance happened, by which they attracted the attention of the inhabitants of this populous town. A person was convicted, at the Nottingham assizes, of robbing the mail; and received sentence of death. While he lay under condemnation, several general baptist friends and their ministers frequently visited him; and their instructions and prayers appeared to be highly blest to his spiritual advantage. On the day of execution, great crowds collected from distant villages; and Messrs. Tarratt and Pollard attended the unhappy culprit on the scaffold. His behaviour, at the awful moment, was composed and resigned. Mr. Pollard, in a very affecting manner, addressed the attentive multitude; and the effect produced on many was strikingly visible. After the

solemn scene was closed, the body was placed on the head of a cask in the street; and Mr. Tarratt, standing on another, delivered an animated discourse, from Psal. 86:12, 13. From this time, the general baptist preachers, especially Messrs. Pollard and Tarratt, were attended by numerous congregations; and many hearing, believed, and were baptized.

In 1783, assisted by the liberality of sister churches, they purchased the Methodist meeting-house, for two hundred and fifty pounds. This new accommodation had a good effect in increasing the number of hearers and, as Mr. Hallam had removed his residence to Leake, they felt strongly the necessity of a more regular ministry. Among the preachers who had visited them, was Mr. Robert Smith, of Loughborough, the son of Mr. F. Smith, of Melbourn, a young man of promising abilities. The friends at Nottingham, highly approved his labours, and were desirous of obtaining him for their pastor. After surmounting many obstacles, arising chiefly from the erroneous ideas which had been entertained of the real state of things in the town and the church, they applied to the association in 1784. That meeting advised Mr. Smith to go to Nottingham, on probation, for one year. He, accordingly, removed in the following June. The affection which the people entertained for this young minister, made them earnest in prayer for the success of this experiment; and the Lord was pleased to grant their requests. Before the close of the year, the congregation had considerably increased; nine were added to the church by baptism; three received from other churches; and two were restored: the whole number of members, in 1785, being seventy-three. The pleasing success, which had so visibly crowned his endeavours, determined Mr. Smith to take his lot with this affectionate people: and, Sept. 11th. 1785, he was admitted a member of their church.

In 1782, a small church of general baptists at Ashford on the Peak, joined the New Connection. It consisted, then, of only ten members; but, in the following year, had increased to fifteen. They were supplied by ministers from the midland and northern districts, Though these supplies were more regular and frequent than, from a consideration of the distance and other circumstances, could have been expected, yet they were found insufficient for the prosperity of the cause, But, as we have not been able to procure a detail of the particulars relating to this society, we refer to the next chapter: when we hope to be able to give a more satisfactory account of its rise and progress. [Min. of Ass. of N.C. 1772--1785. Min. of Linc. Ass. G. B. R. Vol. I, p. 250. Vol. II. pp. 2--8, and information kindly communicated by the respective churches.]

SECT. 3.--The Progress of the General Baptist Cause in the Northern District, during, the first Fifteen Years after the Commencement of the New Connection.

When the was formed, there was but one society of general baptists in the northern district, the church at Birchcliff, under the care of Mr. Dan Taylor.* But these zealous Christians were anxious to carry the glorious light of the gospel into the places which, on every side of them, lay in spiritual darkness. The labours of their minister to accomplish this noble object were almost incredible. To this he devoted all the energies of a mind naturally vigorous and enterprising, and of a constitution remarkably hardy and capable of fatigue. His people, in general, seconded his efforts; and heartily cooperated with him, as far as circumstances permitted. The happy result of their united endeavours was, that, under the blessing of the great Head of the church, before the close of fifteen years, four

regular general baptist churches were established, and several acceptable ministers called forth and usefully employed in the sacred work. Let us now take a brief survey of these societies, as they arose; beginning with the parent stock.

The church at Birchcliff, sensible of the importance of more assistance in the great work of preaching the gospel, used all proper means to call forth more labourers into the field. So early as 1772, four young men met weekly for the exercise of their gifts and, once a month, they had an interview with their pastor, for advice and instruction. Prayer meetings were opened in various parts of the neighbourhood, and experience meetings were regularly maintained in the different districts of the church. The good effects of these measures were soon visible. In the next year, Richard Folds, a young member who had thus exercised his abilities, was encouraged to preach. Soon afterwards, Mr. John Taylor, the brother of the pastor, who had joined the society in the beginning of that year, was called to exercise before the church: when his friends, being satisfied with his fitness for the sacred employment, gave him permission, Dec. 26th. 1771, to preach as opportunity should offer. Not long after this, Jeremy Ingham, another of the members, was approved as a minister; and, after preaching occasionally in this district for some time, was invited to serve the church at Maltby in Lincolnshire: where he laboured till his death. The cause also prospered: the meetings were well attended; the members lively; and the prospect encouraging.

This increase of ministers led to more extended labours. Soon after Mr. Taylor's settlement at Wadsworth, he had by some means, succeeded in carrying the news of salvation to Shore; a desolate and uncultivated village, about seven miles from Birchcliff. He had continued to traverse, with alacrity, the bogs and mountains, to preach occasionally in this neglected spot. Nor was his labour wholly in vain. He had, even there, some seals to his ministry. When other preachers were raised up to his assistance, they were enabled to visit it more regularly; and the cause gained strength. In 1777, it was determined to erect a small meeting-house at Shore, which was opened, in the autumn, by Messrs. D. and J. Taylor. The ministers of the neighbouring churches supplied it as regularly as circumstances permitted: and the friends there continued to be considered as members of Birchcliff church, till after the close of the period now under review. Previous, also, to the erection of the meeting-house at Shore, preaching had been established at Queenshead. In supporting the cause at that place, also, Mr. D. Taylor had laboured much: and, for some time, preached there one Lord's-day in the month; when his brother supplied his place at Birchcliff. These, and various other engagements, connected with the promotion of the general baptist interest, called Mr. Taylor frequently from his own friends; and obliged them to relinquish the profit and pleasure which they reaped from his ministerial labours, to attend the crude attempts of young preachers: but their wish for the prosperity of the cause in which their pastor was so much employed, induced them, in general, to make these sacrifices, not only without regret, but with sincere pleasure. [This was not universally the case. A few members of the church were dissatisfied. For several years, they contented themselves with occasional grumblings; and hoped that Mr. Taylor would, at length, grow weary and content himself at home.-- When, however, they observed that things grew every year worse; and that there no prospect that he would ever desist; but would, as long as he was able to travel, continue

to preach the gospel and plant the general baptist interest in every place to which Providence gave him access, they broke out into open complaints. The peace of the church was, for a time, interrupted: but a few of the most discontented having withdrawn, harmony was restored: and this active man left at liberty to exert his whole strength in the pursuit of his favourite object.]

Thus this church continued to promote the interests of religion, both in its own neighbourhood, and at distant places. Numbers were continually added; and harmony and love distinguished all their proceedings. But, in 1783, an event took place, which, for a time, had considerable effect on their peace. The friends at Halifax had then become a distinct church; and, being situated in a populous and genteel town and neighbourhood, where there were other dissenting interests respectably supported, it was desirable that the general baptist cause, in that place should enjoy every possible advantage. As Mr. D. Taylor was the most able and experienced minister, in these parts; and best qualified to defend and explain the distinguishing principles of his denomination, it was thought, that, for the general good of the cause, he should leave Birchcliff and settle at Halifax. This was, at first, warmly opposed by the friends at the former place: and much discussion and many meetings ensued. At last, it was agreed, that an experiment should be made and that the result should determine the dispute. The church at Birchcliff had, at that time, a respectable young man, who had, for several years, preached occasionally, with much acceptance. His name was John Sutcliffe. It was, therefore, settled, that Mr. D. Taylor should labour for six months chiefly at Halifax: and that Mr. Sutcliffe should preach at Birchcliff: and if, at the expiration of this time, it should appear, that the cause at the latter place had not suffered any material injury; and that, at the former, peculiar benefit had been received, then Mr. Taylor should settle at Halifax. This experiment commenced with the year 1783; and the result was laid before the association at Nottingham, in June following. After a candid and serious investigation of all the circumstances, that meeting gave it as its opinion "that it would be more for the advantage of the cause of Christ for Brother Taylor to continue at Halifax." To this decision all the parties submitted: and the church at Birchcliff lost their founder and pastor. "This," to use their own simple but expressive language, "was one of the greatest troubles we ever experienced. We did all that we could do, with a good conscience, to prevent it; but all in vain."

Soon after Mr. Taylor's removal, the church called Mr. J. Sutcliffe to the pastoral office: and, though a few withdrew in consequence of these troubles, yet thirteen were added by baptism before the next association. The cause of Christ, notwithstanding this check, continued to advance; harmony was restored to their proceedings; and, in 1785, the number of members, after dismissing twenty-two to form a separate church at Burnley, was ninety-three: they were well attended with hearers; and harmonious among themselves.

When the general baptists began to preach at *Queenshead*, there existed only one public-house, from the sign of which the place took name; and a few scattered cottages: there being no village on any side within two miles. It is situated about three miles north of Halifax, and eleven east of Birchcliff. There was only one dissenting meeting-house in a circuit of several miles; which was two miles from Queenshead, and belonged to the

independents. The few inhabitants were ignorant and rude; and, it is highly probable, the ordinance of believers' baptism had never been heard of by many of them.

Mr. D. Taylor had an acquaintance with a local preacher among the methodists, who dwelt within a mile of Queenshead. Being on a visit to this friend, he was requested to preach. Among the hearers was John Bairstow, who resided in the neighbourhood. This plain man was very much pleased with the discourse, and felt a desire to hear again the same minister. He went to Birchcliff for this purpose; and was soon convinced of the truth of the doctrines held by the baptists. Early in 1772, he was baptized and received into fellowship.

This young convert, with the ardour usual in persons of that description, was frequently engaged in defending his principles and practice against his neighbours, especially the Independents. Amongst others, he had frequent conversation, on these subjects, with Mr. Jonathan Scott, a respectable tradesman in the vicinity of Queenshead. But, finding himself unequal to the contest with him, he procured an interview between Mr. D. Taylor and Mr. Scott. This led to an intimacy, which soon ripened into friendship. Mr. Scott entered heartily into the religious views of his new acquaintance, and became desirous that the gospel might be regularly preached in his neighbourhood. Mr. J. Taylor, of Halifax, who had lately been called to the work of the ministry, and a few of his neighbours, who had also joined the Birchcliff church, and were well acquainted with Queenshead, united in the same wish. It was therefore, agreed that an attempt should be made; and J. Taylor preached the first discourse, in J. Bairstow's house, about half a mile from Queenshead, Nov. 28th 1772, from the comprehensive aphorism of the apostle, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" [1 Cor. 3:11]. This first attempt was well attended: and, before the next Lord's-day, a more commodious place was hired, near the public-house, and fitted up for a meeting-house. From this time, constant worship was maintained: J. Taylor preaching three Lord's-days in each month; and D. Taylor the fourth: when his brother supplied his place at Birchcliff.

Though many circumstances had a very discouraging effect, yet these good men persevered and the Lord helped them. They struggled through the winter with many difficulties but the meetings were well attended for the season; and the truths which were preached appeared to make an impression on several of the hearers. In the following February, J. Scott and another person were publicly baptized. Mr. D. Taylor was the administrator: and delivered, on the occasion, a plain, faithful and affectionate discourse on believers' baptism; in which he exhorted his hearers, in very pressing terms, to search the scriptures and judge for themselves. Many of them determined to take his advice: and, for several weeks, a peculiar activity prevailed throughout the neighbourhood. Those that had bibles, and could read, were busily employed in consulting them; and those who had not these advantages, were eagerly listening to the researches of their more intelligent friends. This appeal to the scriptures had a happy effect. Many were thus convinced that believers' baptism was of scriptural authority; and, when they afterwards turned from sin to God, they were prepared to attend, without hesitation, to that sacred ordinance.

As the spring advanced, the friends of the cause began to look out for a more convenient place of meeting; and purchased a piece of ground very near the house in which they then assembled. On Easter Monday, April 12th. 1773, a number of cheerful neighbours digged the ground, for the formation of a new meeting-house; and the workmen commenced the building. A collection was made in the neighbourhood, and twenty pounds obtained: a great effort, when the fewness and poverty of the inhabitants are considered. Mr. D. Taylor also having occasion, in the spring to visit some of the midland and Lincolnshire churches, obtained for them sixty pounds; and the remainder of the money was borrowed. The whole expence was about one hundred and sixty pounds.

At the close of Aug. 1773, the number who had joined the general baptists at Halifax and Queenshead had increased to seventeen; who had been baptized by Mr. D. Taylor, and were members of the church at Birchcliff. Many obvious reasons, however, made it desirable for all parties, that they should be formed into a distinct society. They were accordingly dismissed from the mother church; and constituted the second general baptist church in the northern district. Mr. J. Taylor was invited to be their pastor, and accepted the invitation. Preparations were, therefore, made for opening their new meeting-house and ordaining their minister. Messrs. William Thompson, of Boston, J. Tarratt, of Kegworth, and D. Taylor, their spiritual father, were invited to assist them in these important solemnities. Sept. 29th. 1773, the meeting-house was opened. Mr. Tarratt read suitable portions of scripture, and prayed: Mr. Thompson expounded and applied Psal. 132; and Mr. D. Taylor preached, from 1 Kings 9:3. On the following day, Mr. J. Taylor was solemnly ordained to the pastoral office: when Mr. D. Taylor delivered the introductory discourse, put the questions to the minister and people, offered the ordination, prayer, and gave the charge to his brother, from 2 Tim. 2:15. [This charge was remarkable for its affection, solemnity and length: containing, as it was asserted by one who heard it, six hundred particulars.] In the afternoon, Mr. Tarratt addressed the church from 1 Thess. 5:12, 13.

Being thus organized, these few people were left to their own exertions, for the support and extension of the blessed cause which they had undertaken. The winter soon commencing, rendered their congregations thin, and checked their progress. But they still had some encouragement. Oct. 29th. three persons were baptized: and, Dec. 25th. seven others: so that at the close of the first year, the church had increased to twenty-eight members. Some disadvantage was experienced, by their pastor's distance of abode, as he still resided at Halifax: but, Nov. 1774, he removed, with his family, to Queenshead. He laboured hard for the advancement of the cause; and his labours were crowned with success.--Thirty were added to the church in the course of this year; and the preaching of the gospel had been extended to various places several miles distant. They had, also, paid particular attention to Halifax: and had taken several steps to introduce the gospel into that town.

For several years, the cause appeared to flourish; and numbers were, from time to time, baptized: so that, before the close of 1776, upwards of one hundred had been received into fellowship. But it then became too apparent, that several of these were very improper characters. Ignorance and inexperience, joined to a great zeal to increase their numbers,

had caused these young professors to be too ready admitting candidates: and the same causes probably urged them, when they perceived this error, to proceed with too much precipitation in excluding offenders.. For many succeeding years, exclusions were frequent and additions few. This decline was much increased, by the disorderly conduct of one or two of their members; who had been called to the work of the ministry, but whose future conversation proved too plainly that they were destitute of that faith which purifies the heart. During this time, however, much was done by the ministers and people at Queenshead for the spread of the gospel. For several years, their pastor was nearly one half of the time employed, in helping other churches, and in preaching in places in which the cause had not been planted.

Regular preaching had been maintained at Halifax, almost from the first formation of the Queenshead church; and several had joined in fellowship from that neighbourhood. They continued to form one society, till 1782, when an amicable separation took place: and about thirty, members were dismissed, to form a distinct society; which has since been known by the appellation, of Halifax church.

After this division, fifty members remained in the society at Queenshead: and, though the wounds that had been given to religion, by the disorders of former years, were still bleeding, yet a few were successively added to their number, and, in 1785, the members amounted to fifty-two. They then describe the state of the church in these terms. "The congregation is full when the weather is moderate. Many of our friends are frequently confined at their homes by bodily afflictions and poverty: and many are too much taken up with the things of this world. Yet, glory be to God, we hope that some are hearty in his cause and for his glory. We are saved by hope."

During this period, several ministers were raised up in this church; who were afterwards useful in various parts of the connection. Among these, Jonathan Scott deserves particular notice; who was, from the commencement of the cause in this neighbourhood, usefully and acceptably employed in labouring as an assistant preacher. In 1785, he removed to serve the church at Gainston and Retford. Mr. Joseph Ellis, also now pastor at Halifax, was a member at Queenshead, and called to the ministry in 1784.

Mr. John Taylor was the first general baptist *in Halifax*; but, soon after his uniting himself with that denomination, several of his neighbours and acquaintances followed his example. So early as 1772, Mr. D. Taylor had frequent opportunities of preaching in private houses in that town. Though there appeared but little encouragement, yet the services were occasionally continued; and, in May 1775, it was resolved to make a more regular attempt to raise an interest. Overtures were made to the independents, who were then building a new meeting-house, to purchase their old one; but they declined treating with people of such different sentiments. A chamber was, therefore, hired, at the bottom of Jail-lane, and regular preaching was commenced. The ministers from Birchcliff and Queenshead attended in rotation, and considerable efforts were made: but the success was small. Few of the inhabitants of the town attended, except when Mr. D. Taylor preached: and the congregation, which was very small, was then composed of persons from the

suburbs and adjacent villages with a few who usually attended from the vicinity of Queenshead.

It was thought that greater countenance might be obtained, if they had a more respectable place of meeting: and Messrs. D. Taylor, Jonathan Scott, and the friends at Halifax, made a considerable effort to accomplish this desirable object. In the beginning of 1777, a piece of ground was purchased at Haley Hill, half a mile from the town, and a neat chapel was erected; which was opened, Sept. 3d. 1777, by Messrs. D. and J. Taylor. The latter delivered a discourse from Zech. 6:12, 13; and the former from Hag. 2:9. The friends from Birchcliff and Queenshead attended on this occasion, and enjoyed much satisfaction: but even this interesting event did not induce many of the inhabitants of the town to witness the solemnity. The prospect of great success still continued very doubtful. The gloom was increased by the spirit of partiality and prejudice with respect to particular ministers, which manifested itself too plainly both in Queenshead and Halifax; and, for several years, grieved the hearts, and weakened the hands, of the sincere friends of the Redeemer. A few, however, were added, during this discouraging season, who have been ornaments to their profession.

In 1780, Mr. J. Bates, who had been for some time a member of the church at Queenshead, began to preach: and his labours being well approved by the friends at Halifax, he removed to Haley Hill, opened a school, in the meeting-house, and became their regular minister. The prospect appeared to brighten, and sanguine hopes were entertained, that success might yet crown the attempt. But this gleam was transient. Mr. Bates maintained certain views on some divine subjects, which were thought to be inconsistent with the principles of the general baptists. This produced a coolness between him and his hearers; which in less than a year after his first settlement, issued in a separation. After his secession, the pulpit was chiefly supplied by the preachers from Queenshead, with the occasional assistance of Mr. D. Taylor.

Hitherto, the friends at Halifax had continued members of the church at Queenshead: but, in 1782, it was thought advisable to separate. This was now effected by mutual consent; and, every one being left at full liberty to join which society he pleased, about thirty united to form the church at Halifax.

In the following year, after much investigation and difficulty, as we have already seen, it was resolved, that, for the greater advantage of the general baptist cause, Mr. D. Taylor should remove from Birchcliff to Halifax. This he did and, Oct. 8th. 1783, was solemnly set apart to the pastoral office over this society: when William Thompson addressed the minister and Mr. Tarratt the people. [The former from Rev. 2:10, last clause: and the latter from 1 Thess. 5:12-15.] This was a high day for this small church. Every heart felt satisfaction, and every countenance beamed with delight. Earnest and cordial thanks were offered by many, for the happy prospect of the future prosperity of this hitherto languishing interest.

For a short space, these hopes appeared likely to be realized. Mr. Taylor's abilities and character were highly esteemed in the neighbourhood--the congregation increased in

number and respectability--peace and confidence were restored to the church--several were added to it--and many appeared to be ready to come forward and declare themselves on the Lord's side. But an unexpected cloud soon overspread the horizon. The ancient society of general baptists, which assembled in Church-lane, Whitechapel, wishing for an assistant to their aged pastor, Mr. John Brittain, turned their eyes to Mr. D. Taylor, as a person qualified to serve them. They applied, therefore, to the church at Halifax, and requested them to resign him. Most of the Yorkshire friends were thunderstruck at the proposal, and felt disposed to reject it without examination: and some of the principal members at Halifax were so disgusted at the attempt, that they refused to take any part in the subsequent discussions. The subject was, however, largely and frequently discussed: and the advocates for Mr. Taylor's continuance *at* Haley-Hill had the mortification to find their own weapons turned against themselves. Every argument drawn from the comparative importance of the *two* places, the opportunities for being useful, or the general advantage *of the* common cause, which had been advanced to prove the propriety of the removal of this minister from Birchcliff to Halifax. was now urged with increased effect in favour of his leaving Halifax for London. Some of the Yorkshire friends perceived this; and, with a laudable consistency, seconded the claims of London: but many held out; and the matter was referred to the Boston association, in 1785. That assembly, after a very laborious and serious investigation of the question, declared in favour of Mr. Taylor's removal to London. This decision was final.--Mr. Taylor and his family set out for London, in the middle of July, 1785: leaving the church at Halifax, which then consisted of fifty-six members, again destitute of a pastor.* Mr. J. Scott and his family removed, at the same time, from the neighbourhood of Queenshead to Retford in Nottinghamshire.

[* The removals of Mr. D. Taylor, from Birchcliff to Halifax, and afterwards to London, were, we apprehend, the first instances of a minister leaving the church over which he had been ordained pastor, that occurred in the New Connection. Whether this practice, which has become not uncommon, be not prejudicial to the interests of religion, is a question which demands the conscientious attention of all parties concerned. These first precedents, however, were fully investigated: and it may, perhaps, be useful to insert the record of the deliberations, at the Boston association, respecting the removal to London. This will not only shew the pains taken to arrive at a proper conclusion on that occasion; but may also suggest some useful hints to those who may have to determine in similar cases. "It was then agreed to discuss the subject of brother D. Taylor's removal to London, in the following manner 1. To throw the matter into a systematic form, by proposing certain questions. 2. To read the papers from London and Halifax carefully over, before the discussion of questions. 3. To receive an account of what has been done, in the three branches of the connection, respecting the removal. 4. To contrast London with Halifax; and inquire which is of most importance. 5. To inquire, in which place and round it, there are the most apparent opportunities of doing good. 6. To inquire, whether there are better instruments to be had for Halifax or London, as fitted for the place. 8. To inquire, if both places be without a suitable minister, which ought to be supplied. 9. After the above questions had been discussed, in order that every thing might be done or said in favour of Halifax, the cases from Halifax church were deliberately read over, and some questions having been asked, and observations made, the final query was solemnly

put:--Does it appear, on the whole, likely to be for the glory of God and the good of mankind, that brother D. Taylor remove to London?--Answer. Yes, 17. Neuter, 8." Min. of Ass. 1785. Two occasional questions were introduced in the discussion, which, as not bearing on the precise subject, are omitted.]

The church at *Burnley*, which was formed into a distinct society at the close of the period now under review, demands a brief notice. The general baptists at Birchcliff, in their zeal to spread the gospel, had pushed their attempts seven miles beyond Shore, to Worsthorn, a village about two miles from Burnley, a small market town in Lancashire, twenty-one miles north west of Halifax. At Worsthorn they began to preach, in the open air, in the summer of 1776. There was, at first, a little confusion among the hearers but it was rather jocular than spiteful; and subsided, after they had preached a few times. An inhabitant of the place at length opened his door to receive the ministers; and, for some time, they preached regularly in his house: but they afterwards removed to an apartment in a neighbouring village. The encouragement was never very flattering: for, though the hearers were as numerous as could reasonably be expected, yet not many came forwards to espouse the cause.--Several, however, appeared serious: and a few joined the church at Birchcliff. Mr. Richard Folds, who had preached occasionally under the sanction of that church, removed his residence to Worsthorn, and became the constant minister in that vicinity.

About 1730, it was determined to remove the place of worship from Worsthorn to Burnley. A house was accordingly hired in the town for the purpose: and Mr. Folds removed with his family to occupy it. Here the cause was supported for several years: and, though the increase was slow, it was regular. In the beginning of 1780, it was determined, that the friends at Burnley should form a separate society. Twenty-two of the members of Birchcliff, who lived in that neighbourhood, were, therefore, regularly dismissed and, uniting to support the interest of the Redeemer, invited Mr. Folds to take the oversight of them. This invitation he accepted: and was ordained, Mar. 29th, by Messrs. D. and J. Taylor, and J. Sutcliffe. Four candidates had been baptized, by Mr. D. Taylor,* on the day previous to the ordination: so that the number of members then amounted to twenty-six. [* Among the candidates, was Mr. Edmund Whitaker, of whom we shall have occasion to speak in another place. Baptism, by immersion, was a new sight to the inhabitants of Burnley, and attracted numbers of disorderly spectators. It was administered near the bridge, in the rivulet, that runs through the town. When the minister and candidates were in the water, the mob, pushed down a part of the battlements of the bridge into the stream, very near them. Happily, no mischief ensued. The young professors shewed some symptoms of fright; but the administrator *stood unmoved*.]

SECT. 4.--The History of the General Baptist Churches in Lincolnshire, daring the first Fifteen Years after the Commencement of the New Connection.

The only church in Lincolnshire, which permanently united in forming the New Connection, was the society at *Boston*, under the care of Mr. W. Thompson. We left it, in 1770, increasing *in* numbers and improving *in* order. The worthy pastor, and a few of the leading members, persevered in their endeavours to promote the cause of the Redeemer: and their efforts were not without success. Additions were frequently made to the church;

and the hearers continued to increase. The labours of Mr. William Veall, a promising young minister whom it had pleased God to raise up among them, contributed not a little to this success. Having devoted himself to the Lord by baptism, in the sixteenth year of this age, this pious youth walked steadily forwards in the ways of religion; and, in his twentieth year, was called by the church to preach in public. Being a sincere lover of the Saviour, his delight was to proclaim a free and full salvation to perishing sinners. But his usefulness was short. He was called to the church above, Nov. 12th, 1771, before he had completed his twenty-first year.

Notwithstanding this affecting check, the cause regularly advanced. In 1777, the meeting-house was enlarged, at an expence of upwards of two hundred and seventy pounds. To raise this money, a subscription was set on foot among the friends; which received great encouragement from Robert Barlow, esq. who, though only a hearer, generously contributed fifty pounds. By these means, nearly two hundred pounds were raised, and application was made to the Connection for assistance. But, after several years' solicitation, a debt of upwards of fifty pounds remained; which operated very unfavourably on the prosperity of-the cause. To remove *this impediment*, their generous patron, Mr. Barlow, again stepped forwards; and, by discharging the whole sum, freed the church from incumbrance. For this act of munificence, the church. Sept. 27th, 1780, voted him a letter of thanks.

Thus set at liberty, the cause proceeded with more rapidity. heir enlarged place of worship was soon filled with attentive hearers: and, though they complained, from year to year, that *those, who as they* had reason to believe were really converted, delayed to join the church, yet, during the fifteen years now under review, eighty-five persons, had been baptized on a profession of faith; besides various others, who had been received by recommendation from sister churches. But such had been the ravages of death,* that, in 1785, the members amounted only to eighty. At that time, they had nine candidates waiting for baptism; were united and happy; and well attended with hearers.

[* On the margin of the list of the names of the eighty-three members, who, Aug. 5th. 1738, subscribed the invitation of Mr. Goode to the pastoral office, which is preserved in the church book, Mr. Thompson has made this memorandum. "N.B. This 30th. of July 1781, of the number of members above written, I find now only four or five living, In the space of forty-three years, most of them are dead Awful thought! Let we improve it."]

Maltby is a village on the cast of Lincolnshire, about twenty-five miles north of Boston. At this place, there existed an ancient general baptist society, which had probably been connected *with the* churches in the South Marsh; and greatly reduced in the general decline of the cause. In 1773, fifteen of the members of this church, being dissatisfied with the old Connection, withdrew from its communion, and established it separate interest. Agreeing in their views of the truths of christianity with the New Connection, they were cordially admitted into that union, and promised ministerial assistance. They were visited occasionally by the preachers, and several converts soon joined their society. In 1775, Mr. Jeremiah Ingham, a young man. who had been called to the ministry by the

Birchcliff church, settled with them as a preacher; and, after some time of probation, was ordained to the pastoral office over them.

Mr. Ingham's labours were blest with great success: and, in the following year, twenty-three were baptized. For a few years, this prosperity continued; but, in 1782, we find them complaining, that no additions were made to their numbers--that their members were slack in attending public worship--and that religion was in a *low* state. A pleasing revival, however, took place in the succeeding year: as they had then commenced preaching at Alsford, a market town about four miles to the south of Maltby; and at Theddlethorpe, at nearly the same distance, to the north. The attendance at all the places was encouraging; but especially so at Maltby. For some time, all these meetings were maintained with spirit and regularity; and the cause visibly gained ground: but Mr. Ingham's declining health obliged him, in 1785, to relinquish the attempt at Theddlethorpe. At that time, this church consisted of seventy-five members; their places of worship were well attended; and the society peaceable.

Mr. Henry Poole, who attended at the formation of the New Connection as the minister of Fleet church, did not long, continue to serve that congregation. His strain of preaching was considered as too methodistical, and a separation took place. But, as he had gained some partisans at Sutton-Garnsgate, a place a few miles from Fleet, he removed thither, and founded a new interest; which, from a village in its immediate vicinity, was denominated Long-Sutton church. In 1773, this society was admitted into the New Connection. It then, and for several following years, consisted of only seventeen members. Yet Mr. Poole continued to preach with great fervour; and at length saw some fruit of his labours. He was regularly called and ordained to the pastoral office, over this small church; and a meeting-house was erected, at an expence of upwards of two hundred pounds: part of which was raised by subscription, and part collected among the churches of the New Connection.

This meeting-house was completed in 1776; and, for a time, was well filled. In 1778, the cause revived; and sixteen were baptized; which raised the number of members to thirty-four. But it soon began to droop: and, in 1785, the number was reduced to twenty-nine; and religion, it was feared, "was not on the advance."

It was also during this period, that the ancient society of general baptists at Killingholm, *joined* the New Connection. Killingholm is a village situated on the south side of the Humber, in the north east corner of Lincolnshire, about nine miles south east of Barton. In this neighbourhood, a general baptist church had existed for more than a century. But its records being very imperfect, only a general account of its transactions can now be obtained.

In 1686, it was in a flourishing state, under the pastoral care of Mr. Thomas Sergeant; who appears to have been a very respectable and useful minister, and a person of considerable influence among his brethren in those parts.* The church then consisted of seventy or eighty members, who were scattered in ten or twelve villages; and maintained regular meetings at Elsham, Melton, Ross, Keelby, Killingholm, and Winterton. Mr.

Sergeant continued to preside over this prosperous interest till the spring of 1705, when he was probably removed by death. He was succeeded in the pastoral office by Mr. James Wood, he was ordained, by Mr. Joseph Hooke, Aug. 15th. 1705.

[* In 1702, Mr. Sergeant accompanied Mr. Hooke to the General Association in London, as the representatives of the Lincolnshire churches; and, on various other occasions, he appears to have taken a leading part in the transactions of the Lincolnshire general baptists.]

For several years, Mr. Wood laboured successfully among this people; but the time of his decease is not known. The last time he attended the Lincolnshire Association was March, 1712. It is probable, that Mr. Thomas Ullyott, who, for some years, acted as the colleague of Mr. J. Hooke, in the messenger's office, was either co-pastor with Mr. J. Wood or his successor, or perhaps both. When Mr. Ullyott died is also uncertain; but, in 1720, Mr. Thomas Wakeham appears to have been the pastor of this society. Under him the cause declined: for, to a meeting for discipline, in 1737, at which William Johnson, the messenger, presided, there are only four signatures, besides the pastor's. The members, therefore, were probably few. Mr. Wakeham died Feb. 14th. 1747. He was a pious minister; and evinced his attachment to the cause of his Redeemer, by making a donation of a piece of land for a meeting-house and burying-ground; which the church still possesses. About the same time, Mr. Stapp, a member of this congregation, bequeathed five acres of land to the church for the support of the minister.

Mr. William Soulden, probably, succeeded Mr. Wakeham as pastor, in 1748; when the number of members was about fifty. This was a time of deep declension; several persons were excluded for seeking to such as pretended to have familiar spirits, for drunkenness, and for other disorders: and the cause rapidly declined. Mr. Soulden lived till 1768. After his decease, Mr. John Hannath, a respectable member of this society, who had begun to preach, with considerable acceptance, probably so early as 1755, undertook the whole work of the ministry. But the cause had then sunk so low, that, in 1771, there were only eighteen nominal members, vital religion was very low, and discipline much neglected. Such was the deplorable account which Mr. Hannath gave to the Lincolnshire Association.

But, from this time, there seems to have been a degree of improvement. Mr. Hannath was unanimously chosen to the pastoral office, Oct. 3d. 1773, and ordained by Messrs. D. Taylor and William Thompson. As he coincided in sentiment with these ministers, he forsook the Lincolnshire Association; and, in 1775, attended the annual meeting of the New Connection, which was held that year at Boston. Having given all account of his experience and opinions, which was unanimously approved, he was admitted a member of that association. His people also after making regular application, was, the following year, placed on their list of churches. The cause continued to advance, though very slowly: and, in 1785, the number of members, was twenty-eight, who were unanimous and friendly.

In 1776, Killingholm fields were inclosed: when the ground allotted to the church in lieu of the right of commonage was unjustly claimed by a neighbour, Mr. Hannath recovered it by a process at law; and liberally fenced it in, at his own expence.

During this period, there was a general baptist church at Yarmouth, in Norfolk, over which Mr. Benjamin Worship was ordained pastor. Jan. 9th., 1775, by Messrs. D. Taylor and W. Thompson. In the year following, it was received into the New Connection. It then consisted of nearly fifty members; and the prospect was encouraging. We hear no more of it till 1782, when the members were reduced to twenty, and religion was low. It seems to have languished for some years beyond the close of this period, and then to have expired. [In 1780, the church at *Kirton* in Lindsay joined the New Connection. It is an ancient church; but as we have not been able to obtain any particulars of its previous history, we refer of it, as well as of the churches at Gosterton, and Wisbeach, which, at the close of this period, made overtures for a similar union, to the next chapter.]

SECT. 5.--The History of the General Baptists Societies in the Southern District, during the first Fifteen Years after the Formation of the New Connection.

The society which assembled in *Church-lane, Whitechapel*, was, as we have already seen, a member of the New Connection, at its first formation. But, whether from the distance of the places at which the annual associations were held, or for some other unassigned cause, the representatives of this church seldom appeared at those meetings. There is not, however, the slightest reason to suspect that want of zeal for the great doctrines which distinguished that connection induced their absence. Their zealous pastor gloried in the title of a free-grace general baptist; and it is evident, from their subsequent conduct, that his people heartily coincided in his views of divine truth.

During the former part of this period, the cause in Church-lane continued to flourish. Mr. Brittain's labours were well attended and successful: additions were frequent; and the zeal of many abounded. In 1775, Mr. Rowcliff, who had been called to the ministry by this society, was dismissed to the Park church, *and* became its pastor: and some others were, about the same time, called to preach the gospel. Several checks, indeed, occurred, amidst these encouragements and the conduct of some of the members gave occasion of trouble, and called for the exercise of discipline: yet, upon the whole, the interest of religion advanced. But, towards the close of this period, the scene changed. Mr. Brittain's vigour began to abate; and the effects of advancing years rendered him less useful and acceptable as a preacher than he *had formerly* been. The congregations became thin; few came forwards to join the church; and the cause rapidly declined. In 1784, the number of members, which, at the commencement of the New Connection, were stated at three hundred, had decreased to one hundred and fifty: and the indifference and irregularity of many of these gave too much cause for anxiety and alarm to those who really sought the prosperity of Zion. [Notwithstanding this decline in numbers, the members of this society continued to give evidence of their zeal for the promotion of the general baptist cause, by their liberal exertions in cases of a pecuniary nature. For, though it does not appear, that many rich men were connected with them; yet when application was made to them for assistance in building the meeting-house at Leiceiter, in the winter of 1783, more than

one hundred and ten pounds were easily collected. And in the year following, twenty-three pounds, were soon raised by a private subscription among themselves, for white-washing and painting, their own meeting-house.--At this time, the church was blessed with several valuable and active members: among whom *were* Mr. William Shenston, who, for more than twenty years, filled the office of deacon, with honour to himself and advantage to the society; and Mr. W. Burgess, who, soon after was called to the ministry. These two, together with Mesrs. Burston, Smithers and Paxton, were ordained to the deacon's office, Sept. 25th. 1785. Messrs. B. Lewis, J. Henry, J. Bradshaw, &c. were also very active and useful.]

Among those who, perceived and mourned over this declension, the venerable pastor, now in his seventy-fourth year, was peculiarly affected with a disinterestedness and zeal for the cause that deserve to be recorded, Jan. 23d. 1784, he earnestly exhorted the church to seek for a proper person who might, after due probation, be engaged to minister *the* word to them; as an assistant to him, during his life, and to whom they might, at his death, look forwards as his successor. At the same time, he urged them to exert themselves to provide a decent support for such an assistant; and set them a laudable example by offering to relinquish a considerable part of the emoluments, which he received from them as their elder, in favour of any minister whom they might choose. These recommendations were taken into consideration at a series of special church-meetings; and, after some alterations and explanations, the propositions of their pastor were gratefully accepted by the church.*

[* In order that the deliberations on this subject might be more free and unrestrained, Mr. Brittain sent his propositions, in a letter, to the church-meeting; declining to attend in person: and the church replied, in the same manner. The concluding sentiments of these communications breathe such a spirit of piety and christian affection, that we believe we shall need no apology for recording them. After recommending to his people the necessity of looking out for *an* assistant, and stating his readiness to co-operate in the important work, the aged pastor thus concludes "That God may direct you in your application--invitation--judgment--and determination--that your souls may be built up and edified--thousands converted--the Redeemer exalted--the Eternal Three glorified--my grey hairs brought to the grave in peace--and you, the church, conformible and affectionately united in love--is and shall be the hearty prayer of your loving brother, affectionate elder, and willing servant, in the cause of our common Lord and Saviour, JOHN BRITTAİN." In allusion to these affectionate prayers, the church replied. "Be assured, dear Sir, that your good wishes for our prosperity, unity, and love, as a church, and our spiritual improvement, as individuals, *are* not without their influence on our minds. In return we embrace, with pleasure, this seasonable opportunity of testifying our sincere regard for your person; and wish you much of the divine presence and power with your soul:--and that you may *be* yet owned for usefulness in the church--enjoy a sweet serenity in your own soul--and, when your heavenly Master has no more work for you in his vineyard below, be received into the paradise of God, with a--'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord'--is the earnest, and constant prayer of the church under your pastoral care."]

The first step which this society took, in order to accomplish their object, was to address *letters* to three leading ministers in the new connection, Messrs. D. Taylor, W. Thompson, and G. Birley, to request their assistance in looking out for a minister. Then, sensible of the importance of the business in which they were engaging, they set apart the Lord's-day-evening weekly, for prayer to the Almighty for his direction and blessing; and observed April 5th as a day of solemn fasting and humiliation, for the decay of religion in the world, but particularly in their own church. They next applied to the annual association at Kirton in Lincolnshire; and, laying their state and wishes before that meeting, requested advice in procuring an assistant for their aged pastor. The answer they received was discouraging. "It is thought," said the Association, "to be a matter of great moment, that our friends in London have an assistant minister; but we cannot, at present, find a person that can be spared from among us, who seems to suit them."

Cold as this reply was, the introduction of the business, on this occasion, had important consequences. The representatives were deeply convinced, that it was highly necessary for the advantage of the general baptist cause at large, that an able minister should be stationed at London: and though, as a body, they declined naming any person as suitable; yet, as individuals, they freely declared their persuasion, that Mr. Dan Taylor was the only minister in the connection qualified for the important post. Some ventured further, and asserted, that his late removal from Birchcliff to Halifax had opened the way for a second change from Halifax to London. These discourses reached the ears of Mr. Brittain; and he eagerly embraced the idea. July 4th, he informed the church, that Mr. Dan Taylor might, probably, for the general advantage, be permitted to come to London. It was immediately resolved, that proper methods should be adopted to procure him. Letters were addressed to the different conferences, and a very delicate and well-written epistle was sent to the church at Halifax. Mr. Taylor had occasion, after the association, to visit London; and preached several times, for this congregation. They were so well satisfied with his character and abilities, that they agreed that his disapproving of the practice of imposition of hands after baptism, though the custom of their church, should be no obstacle to their reception of him as he had no objection to another person's performing it. Several circumstances occurring, which encouraged their hopes of ultimate success, they proceeded zealously to open subscriptions, and make arrangements for the support of their wished-for minister. Their aged pastor, also, in order to facilitate the business, enlarged his proposals of accommodating the church in pecuniary matters: further suggested, that, considering the station, which Mr. Taylor had so long and so honourably filled in the church, it would be more respectful to drop the idea of an assistant preacher, and endeavour to obtain him as joint pastor with himself: an arrangement with which he expressed his hearty concurrence. With these preparations, Messrs. Paxton and Burgess were sent to the annual Association at Boston, in June 1785; to represent the church, and urge their request. At that meeting, as we have already seen, the decision was favourable to their wishes. Mr. Taylor arrived, with his family, in London, July 29th; was admitted into the church Aug. 18: and called to the pastoral office, Aug. 22. He was publicly set apart, as, pastor with Mr. Brittain, Sept. 21; when his old friend, Mr. Thompson of Boston, delivered the charge; an Mr. Samuel Deacon, of Barton Fabis, addressed the church.

Thus was a business which had for more than a year occupied the attention of the entire connection, brought to an honourable issue. The whole was conducted in a manner that does credit to all the parties concerned. This church acted throughout with candour, unanimity and zeal: and it must have yielded them both satisfaction and support to reflect, that all the steps which they took in this affair were accompanied by the full concurrence, the earnest wishes, and frequent and fervent prayers of their venerable and beloved pastor. The members of the church at Halifax, also evinced a truly christian spirit, in resigning, for the benefit of the connection at large, a minister, who was the object of their highest esteem and warmest affection.* While Mr. Taylor himself appears to have taken little part in the discussions which he occasioned; but himself to be disposed of in any way which was thought most likely to promote the good of the cause to which he had devoted himself and all his powers.

[* The letter of dismissal which the church at Halifax gave to Mr. Taylor, addressed to the church in London, commences thus:--"Beloved Brethren,--As it is thought, by the Association of ministers and others, that it will be more for the glory of God and the good of men in general, that our pastor be settled with you in London, although to part with such a valuable and worthy minister, has, in all probability, been the greatest affliction we expect to meet with on this side of the grave; yet, as the great Governor of the universe has a just right to dispose of his servants as he sees best, we, in compliance therewith, humbly acquiesce with the divine providence, and dismiss him to you", &c.]

Our information respecting the church which now assembles in Great Suffolk-street, is, during the present period, very limited. In 1770, it was under the pastoral care of Mr. William Summers, and met in Duke-street. Its pastor assisted at the formation of the New Connection; but no representatives from it attended any of the annual Associations previous to 1785.

When Mr. Summers undertook the oversight of this society, there was a debt of more than five hundred pounds on the meeting-house. The cause reviving, in some degree, under him, the friends exerted themselves to remove this burthen; and, in seven years, paid off more than three hundred pounds. Finding themselves incapable of liquidating the remainder, they sent forth Mr. Summers, with a case, and Confession of Faith, to go, as they express it, "wheresoever the Lord should be pleased to call him; in hopes that he would, through the divine goodness, be recommended, either in public or private, to such as should be able and willing to relieve their present distress." This attempt probably succeeded in obtaining the sum required: as we hear no more of any debt on the meeting-house.

For some time previous to this, Mr. Summers, had leaned too much to the system of the Calvinists: and many thought, that the creed which he drew up for the purpose of collecting, was hardly sound in the principles of the general baptists. But afterwards he acted more openly. He affected to associate with the particular baptists, and availed himself of their assistance in the ordination of deacons, without soliciting the presence of any of the ministers of his own persuasion. His public labours were formed on the same principles; and he seemed determined to change the faith of the church. His attempts

were resisted; and a separation ensued. He hired a meeting-house in the neighbourhood; and was followed by many of the members, and the greater part of the hearers. Here he preached for three or four years; till his partizans forsook him, and the cause expired.

The few members who remained at Duke-street took proper measures to preserve the cause. They applied to their old friends in Church-lane, and were kindly assisted. After having received occasional supplies for two years, Mr. Rowcliff was dismissed from that society, in 1775, and became their pastor. He presided over this church till long after the close of this period; but the cause appears to have continued low, and the prospect discouraging.

We know very little respecting the other societies, in the southern district of the Connection. It appears that, in 1772, that they held an Association at Bessell's-green; but we have no traces of any future meetings of this nature. [The Circular Letter for 1772 is dated from "The Annual Meeting in two Parties or Divisions, viz: at Loughborough, on the 3rd and 4th, and at Bessell's Green, on the 10th and 11th days of June."] In 1772, and the following year, Mr. Stanger of Bessell's Green and a colleague, attended the northern Associations, as the representatives of the southern churches. It is probable that these societies soon began to waver in their attachment to the doctrines on which the New Connection was founded: for, among the Minutes of the Association, at Melbourn, in 1773, we find the following. "The nature of the connection between the northern and southern churches was inquired into: and as there is not a full satisfaction among us concerning two of the ministers in the south, we appoint brother D. Taylor to write to them to know their present sentiments." What the issue of this correspondence was, we are not informed: probably the suspected ministers declined to give any account of their sentiments.

In 1774, it was agreed, by the Association at Wadsworth, that there should be a general assembly of the northern and southern churches held at Hinckley, in 1775; but not one minister or representative from the southern branch attended that meeting. Yet the northern Association did not relinquish their attempt; but, in 1778, directed Mr. Stanger, who was occasionally present at St. Ive's, to inquire into the reasons why the southern churches neglected to associate annually, and to report to the next Association. Mr. Stanger made this report by letter; and the result was very discouraging. As a last resource Mr. D. Taylor was desired to write an exhortatory letter to Mr. Stanger his church, and the rest of the southern brethren. This, doubtless, was done; and, probably, without producing any good effect: as, from this time, all communication between the two branches of the connection appears to have ceased.

SECT. 6.--A brief Survey of the Proceedings of the New Connection, as a Body, during the First Fifteen Years after its Formation.

The first object that occupied the attention of the Connection, was the adoption of proper rules for conducting its annual meetings. With this view, the ministers of the midland churches, and Mr. D. Taylor held a Conference, at Hugglescote, July 20th. 1773; and drew up a set of regulations, which they agreed to recommend to the pastors and churches. They were accordingly sent to each society, with a request that they would

consider them; and enlarge, correct, or alter them, as might appear necessary, previous to the next Association. These rules regarded--the questions to be considered--the mode of presenting them--the order and manner of discussion--the power of the officers--and the persons entitled to act as members of the Association.* They were laid before the Association, at Wadsworth, in 1774: when it was agreed that they should be inserted in the Minutes, and acted upon in future Associations. [* On the last subject, they recommended "that, as serious inconveniencies had arisen, from admitting persons into the Association who were not ministers or elders, the churches should satisfy themselves with those, and only those having a place: unless when a church had no such officers, and then they might choose two brethren, whom the Association would readily admit." It is evident, from this language, that, at this time, the Association was a synod of officers, not an assembly of representatives.]

The method of admitting persons into the Connection, naturally became an early subject of deliberation. At the commencement of this union, as we have already seen, it was required that every one who was admitted should subscribe the six articles which were then adopted. But, in the Association at Hinckley, in 1775, it was the opinion of a decided majority, "that subscription to a creed was not needful; but, that it was sufficient if a person who wished to join the Connection gave in his experience to the Association, and then withdrew while it was debate whether he should be admitted or not:"--and that, if this question was carried in the affirmative, the Connection believed respecting the most fundamental doctrines should be made to him that," say they, "we may try if there be an agreement in religious sentiments." Thus individuals were admitted into the Association: for it was not uncommon then for ministers to be ranked as members of the Association, whose churches were not in the Connection.

But, as the churches became more numerous, it was found necessary to establish some mode of admitting them, into the Connection. At the Association at Castle-Donington, in 1777, it was agreed, that any church desiring admission should signify its request to the annual Association, which request should be inserted in the Minutes:--that, during the succeeding year, such church should send to every society in the Connection a written statement of their religious sentiments, with their thoughts on the character of a true christian, and the proper subjects of baptism and church-fellowship; and that their minister should accompany this statement with an account of his experience--that each church should transmit to the ensuing Association its resolution, whether it could or could not hold communion with such a people as a church of Christ--and that, if the result was then favourable, it should be considered as a branch of the Connection. This mode of admission continued, with a few occasional irregularities, for a number of years, to be the established practice of the Connection.

The increasing prosperity of the New Connection, and the declining state of the few churches which adhered to the Lincolnshire Association, naturally induced the latter to desire a re-union with the former. This was especially the earnest wish of the venerable Gilbert Boyce, and, thro' the whole of this period, he continued anxiously to labour to promote it. He sent an Address to the annual Association, at Boston, in 1776, expressing his strong desire for a re-union, and proposing certain "heads of, agreement," on which he

thought it might be effected. After mature deliberation, that meeting resolved, that the propositions of Mr. Boyce were insufficient for the purpose; but agreed that proposals should be made from the Association to Mr. Boyce and the Old Connection, as a basis for the desired reconciliation: and that a committee, consisting of Messrs. D. Taylor, W. Thompson, J. Grimley, A. Austin, and B. Worship, should be requested to prepare such proposals.

These proposals were accordingly drawn up, and presented to the Lincolnshire ministers, Jan, 1777, by Messrs. D. Taylor and W. Thompson. In May following, they were laid before the Old Association at Coningsby; and were accepted by that meeting, as grounds on which they were ready cheerfully to unite. In order, however, to render the union "perfect, solid, comfortable, and lasting," they sent certain queries to the New Connection. These queries respected the willingness of the latter to join the general Assembly in London--their opinion as to the divine institution of the messenger's office and of imposition of hands on all baptized believers--and what those things were which they styled "indifferent." At the same time, Messrs. Boyce, Thornally, Anderson and Proud, were appointed to meet a committee of the New Connection, at Gosberton, on May 27th. 1777.

The Annual Association of the New Connection met, that year, at Castle-Donington; and these, queries were laid before them. That meeting agreed, that the messenger's office and imposition of hands were not of divine institution:--that singing of psalms and hymns--imposition of hands --the personality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit--the final perseverance of the saints--the imputation of Christ's active obedience to believers--occasional addresses to the Son and the Holy Spirit--the messenger's office--the pre-existence of Christ's human soul--and the eating of blood, might be esteemed less important matters, in which they ought to allow each other the liberty of thinking and acting according to their own views. Mr. D. Taylor was appointed to draw up answers, to the queries; and he, together with Messrs. J. Grimley, N. Pickering, and W. Thompson were nominated to meet the deputation from the Old Connection. The deputies accordingly met, at Gosberton, May 27th 1777: and were attended also by Mr. G. Birley, of St. Ives, and Mr. Poole, of Long Sutton. At the opening of the conference, a difficulty arose--the Lincolnshire ministers declaring, that they could not yet break with the general Assembly, with which the other party refused to unite. The business, however, proceeded: and, after a discussion of nearly two days, the attempt failed, as each party adhered tenaciously to its own views. [The following ingenuous replies to two queries, proposed by the deputies of the New Connection to the Lincolnshire ministers who met them on this occasion, exhibit very clearly the views and wishes of the latter. "Query. 1. What are the principal motives that induce you to labour after a re-union? Answer. 1. Because when you were united with us, you were likely to be of general service to us, 2. Because, since your separation from us, we have sustained material loss with respect to the state of religion among us. 3. because we wish to enjoy your useful labours to strengthen and revive us. Query. 2. What can be the motives that induce you to adhere so closely to the old Assembly, the doctrines and practices of which have no tendency to promote vital religion? Answer. 1. Because we are not convinced that they maintain such doctrine and practices. 2. Because they have considerable additions in several places; and

appear to be hearty, faithful friends to real religion. 3. Because we esteem and love them." Min. of Asso. N.C. 1777.]

In 1784, the subject was again revived. The Lincolnshire association, which then consisted of only five representatives, sent Mr. Proud, jun. to attend the annual Association of the New Connection at Kirton, May 1784: with this friendly message. "We are heartily willing and desirous to re-unite with our brethren who have separated from us, and others connected with them: hoping that they will be equally willing to unite again with us, for the mutual advantage of the whole interest." The members of the Kirton association gave these overtures a friendly reception: and it was mutually agreed that every one should be allowed to follow the dictates of his own conscience respecting imposition of hands, singing in public worship, the eating of blood, and the messenger's office. These preliminary concessions were approved by the Lincolnshire association, held at Coningsby, in 1785: and the prospect of ultimate success began to brighten. But it soon appeared, that however ardently the ministers of the Old Connection desired an union with the New, yet they were unable, even to accomplish this favourite purpose, to relinquish their ancient tenets and practices, At the Boston association, in 1785, Messrs. Boyce, Clark, and Proud attended, and stated, that they could not re-unite, unless the New Connection practised laying on of hands on all persons received into church-fellowship, and abstained from the eating of blood. These conditions could not be accepted; and, for that time, the negotiation closed.

Another circumstance occurred, at the close of this period, which gave the ministers of the New Connection an occasion of explaining more fully their views of the London General Assembly. In 1783, Mr. William Kingsford, a worthy and opulent gentleman near Canterbury, proposed a plan for incorporating the whole body of general baptists in the kingdom into a kind of trading union; by which manufacturers and tradesmen, masters and servants or apprentices, landlords and tenants, persons wishing to retire from business and those desirous of engaging in it, might readily gain intelligence of each other, and easily open a communication. This plan was, in 1783, submitted to the general Assembly in London, and to the annual Association of the New Connection; and, being generally approved by both these meetings, was ordered to be laid before the churches. In 1784, the subject was discussed at large in the Association at Kirton. The members of that meeting jealous lest, by endeavouring to act with the general Assembly in temporal concerns, their religious sentiments should be injured, previous to the discussion of Mr. Kingsford's plan, passed this resolution: "It is the unanimous voice of this Association, that we find ourselves obliged in conscience to except against what we call 'a close union' with all ministers and churches who assert the purity of the human nature, or deny the proper atonement of Christ for the sins of man, and justification before God and acceptance with him enjoyed by faith in Jesus Christ and not by works: which we apprehend to be very fundamental doctrines in the gospel system." They added, by way of explanation, that by excepting against a 'close union,' they meant, that they could not exchange pulpits with such ministers, receive members from such churches, nor make collections for the erection of their meeting-houses. After this precautionary measure, the plan was taken into detailed consideration; and was generally approved. But, as it has

never been carried into execution to any extent, it is needless to enlarge on the particulars.

The method of addressing Circular Letters to the churches, and sending them with the Minutes of the annual Associations, was early adopted, and found useful. The first epistle of this kind was sent from the Association at Loughborough, in 1772. It was drawn up, during the intervals of the meeting, by Mr. Dan Taylor, at the request of his brethren: and contained exhortations to heavenly-mindedness--diligence--self-examination--carefulness not to grieve the holy Spirit--and regard to eternal concerns. Mr. Taylor read it likewise at the meeting of the southern branch of the Connection at Bessell's Green, June 11th 1772; and it was signed by all the ministers of both the Associations. It seems, that no other circular letters were sent till 1777; when it was unanimously resolved, by the Association at Castle-Donington, "that an Association Letter should be every year drawn up; and that Mr. D. Taylor write one, this year, before the ministers separate, on the nature and obligation of church-fellowship." This was done; and similar addresses seem to have been issued by several succeeding Associations, mostly composed by the same hand. Only one of these has fallen under our notice: which was published in 1779; and explained the nature and utility of Associations.

In 1778, the Association strongly advised the churches to encourage their ministers to preach, as often as they could, in the villages around their respective stations. At their next meeting, in consequence of a case from Kegworth, they requested M. D. Taylor to publish a Catechism for the religious instruction of children. He accordingly printed, soon afterwards, a Manual, which has been highly acceptable and useful in the Connection.--Attempts were also made, towards the close of this period, to establish a fund for the education of young men for the ministry: but, as the plan was not matured till some years afterwards, we shall notice it in the next chapter. [Minutes of Assoc. of New Con. 1772-1785.--Min. Linc. Asso. 1772-1785.--Boston, Killingolm and Church Lane Records--Kingsford's Plan--Circular Letters--and Information from the respective Churches.]

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF THE NEW CONNECTION DURING THE SECOND PERIOD OF FIFTEEN YEARS: OR, FROM A.D. 1785 TO A.D. 1800

SECT. 1.--The History of the Churches in the Midland Counties during the Second Fifteen Years after the Formation of the New Connection.

In glancing over the midland societies, our first attention is naturally drawn to the mother church at Barton. We left it, in 1785, in a drooping state, in which it continued for several years. Many of the members were in low circumstances, and exposed to great hardships; and few persons of property or influence favoured the cause. Yet the church was blest with internal peace and union: and, in 1788, they boast, that "for seven years they had not had one jarring church-meeting." In a few years, the cause began to revive. Their meeting-houses were crowded with attentive hearers; and many appeared to be inquiring

the way to Zion. The hopes of the friends of religion were not disappointed: In 1794, no fewer than thirty-one were baptized and joined the church. This animated their ministers to increased exertions; and they pushed their labours, on every side, with great success. In 1798, the number of members amounted to two hundred and sixty; which were scattered over thirty villages, many miles distant from each other. At this time, they maintained regular preaching at Hugglescote, Bosworth, Barlestone, Bagsworth, Odstone and Ratby: at all which places, except Ratby, they were well attended with hearers.

The success of the cause had rendered both the meeting-house and burying-ground at Hugglescote inadequate for the purpose designed. A friend offering them a piece of ground, the old meeting-house was pulled down, 1797; and a more capacious and convenient one erected, and the burying-ground considerably enlarged.

In the following, year, nearly one hundred of the members, who lived at Hugglescote and in its neighbourhood, separated from Barton and formed a distinct church. The remainder however continued their exertions, and soon after this division were encouraged, by an increasing number of hearers to build a small place of worship at Barlestone, to which the same agreeable cause induced them, in 1800, to add galleries. The expences of this building and alteration, together with the erection of Hugglescote meeting-house, exceeded six hundred pounds: great part of which was soon raised by the zeal and liberality of their own friends. These efforts were crowned with the divine blessing. In 1800, twenty-one were baptized; which raised the number of members to one hundred and eighty one.

In 1792, Mrs. Aldridge of Hugglescote imposed five pounds annually on one of her estates, towards the support of the ministers at Barton and Hugglescote: and, in case of separation, directed that it should be equally divided between the two churches. At the same time, the church raised a sum of money to be put out to accumulate at interest, in order to create a permanent fund. This fund was afterwards increased and vested in land; the rents of which, after the decease of the ministers then living were devoted to the support of the General Baptist at Barton.

The society at Melbourn which, in 1785, appears to have been in a flourishing state, struggled for many years afterwards under considerable difficulties. In 1785, forty-six of the members who dwelt about Cauldwell separated by mutual consent, and formed a distinct church. The pastors at Melbourn were advancing in years, and declining in mental and corporeal vigour. Some circumstances transpired, which occasioned Mr. Perkins to retire from preaching, some years previous to his death, which happened in January, 1792. And notwithstanding the weaknesses of old age, there is abundant reason to believe, that he is now singing that grace which, for forty years, he very successfully preached to others. Francis Smith, his colleague, though an ornament to his profession and still zealous to promote the cause of his Redeemer, yet, at seventy years of age, felt himself unable to support the exertions of his former days. The usual effects followed. For several years, they repeat their complaints of disorderly brethren and disagreeable circumstances and the number of their members gradually decreased.

They had many places to supply with ministers and the only assistance which their aged pastor enjoyed was J. Smedley and Thomas Mee. [Thomas Mee, as a preacher, was never popular. During the last ten or twelve years of his life, he lost the use of his limbs; and was commonly drawn in a little wagon, by his friends, to the meeting-house at Packington, when he had to preach. His character as a christian was respectable. He began to preach about 1779, and died about 1795.]

Their efforts to spread the gospel were thus checked; and they felt the necessity of an increase of preachers. At this juncture, R. Harper, who had been in connection with the Methodists, professing a change of sentiments, introduced himself, in Jan 1793, to the friends at Melbourn. Sensible of their need of help, and captivated with the warmth of his manner, and the expressions of piety and zeal which were constantly in his mouth, they incautiously invited him to labour amongst them. It was in vain, that their aged pastor and more experienced brethren advised them to caution and warned them against precipitancy; the infatuated people ran in multitudes after their favourite; and, for a few months, their meeting-houses were crowded to excess. But the delusion soon ceased. The true character of this intruder discovered itself; and his admirers were compelled, very reluctantly indeed, to believe him to be both weak and wicked. He was unanimously forbidden to preach; and in the ensuing November, clandestinely left the town in disgrace.

The peace of the church being thus restored, they had, in a short time, a pleasing addition to their numbers. But their want of help in the great work of preaching increased. After various fruitless endeavours to obtain a supply, they were directed to Mr. Edmund Whitaker, who was then the pastor of the church at Burnley. Their application to him succeeded: and, in May, 1794, he removed with his family to Melbourn. His labours were very respectable and highly blest. The number of hearers increased; many appeared to be seeking the way to Zion; and, in the succeeding year, forty-five were added to the church by baptism. It was found necessary, in the summer of 1795, to build a new meeting-house at Ticknall, a large village two miles from Melbourn, where their labours were crowned with encouraging success.

In the midst of these pleasing scenes, their venerable pastor, Francis Smith, was suddenly called to his reward. On the Lord's-day preceding his death, he rode to Packington, where he preached twice, and administered the Lord's supper. In the evening he went, round and preached at Ticknall; mid afterwards returned home: thus riding, during the day, nearly eighteen miles besides his other labour. In the succeeding week, on March 19th. 1796, he complained to his daughter of a pain in his breast, and, sitting down in his chair, expired in a few minutes, without a sigh or a groan. He had been diligently, faithfully and very successfully employed in the work of the ministry to nearly fifty years: and had uniformly maintained a character, as a man and a christian which had adorned his profession. The church which had grown up under his fostering care, and been the constant object of his most anxious solicitude and earnest prayers, acknowledged his worth and deeply lamented their loss. Their grief was heightened by the death of Mr. Samuel Robinson, a worthy man, a sincere christian, and valuable deacon, who, about the same time, was torn from them in the midst of his activity and usefulness. In the same

year also, Mr. J. Smedley, one of their elders and assistant preachers, was dismissed to serve the church at Retford.

The whole care of the church, now devolved on Mr. E. Whitaker, who was unanimously invited to the pastoral office, and ordained, July 3d. 1797. Soon after which, that branch of the church which assembled at Packington, having for some time suffered much inconvenience from the irregularity and uncertainty of their supplies, invited Mr. Joseph Goadby, a young preacher from Barton, to settle amongst them. This he did; and became their regular minister.

Mr. Whitaker's labours were blest to the building up of the cause; but his bodily strength soon began to fail; so that he could not exert himself to the extent of his desire. The symptoms of an asthma had long been growing upon him: and, in 1799, he was laid aside from preaching for fourteen weeks. His recovery was very doubtful; but he was at length restored to his, sacred work.

At the close of this period, the church maintained regular preaching at six different places, which were generally well attended with hearers. The number of members amounted to two hundred and eighty-four: "they had several waiting for baptism, and many appeared in earnest respecting their eternal concerns."

The general baptists at Cauldwell were so well satisfied with the labours of Mr. Job Burditt, that, withdrawing from Melbourn, they formed themselves into a separate church; and called him to be their regular preacher. This took place, Dec. 25th. 1785. For a short time, the cause prospered: Mr. Burditt was diligent, zealous, and successful. But going to preach at a distant place, he contracted a severe cold which settled on his lungs. This brought on a rapid consumption, of which he died, April 27th. 1786. This mysterious providence deeply affected his surviving friends. They assembled in the house of God, but their instructor was absent. Every heart was too full of its own sorrow to be able to offer any consolation to others. At length, to their surprise and comfort, Charles Norton, the son of Mr. Joseph Norton, who had been instrumental in introducing the gospel into Cauldwell, stood up, and read to his mourning brethren the encouraging words of our Saviour, John 14:1, "Let not your hearts be troubled," &c. On this text, he built some animating exhortations, which suited the circumstances of his hearers, and afforded them great support. His address was so seasonable, and so well approved, that they immediately turned their thoughts to him as the successor of their lamented minister. He had been made a partaker of divine grace in the seventeenth year of his age, and was now about twenty-five. The church had encouraged him to exercise his gifts, in a private manner, before Mr. Burditt's decease; and this unexpected instance of his aptness for the great work, induced them unanimously to call him to the work of the ministry. He was sent, for a few months, to receive the necessary instructions from Mr. S. Deacon, of Barton; and, after his return, resumed his labours. His services being acceptable to his brethren, and blest to the conversion of sinners, he was invited to the pastoral office, and ordained, Sept. 16th. 1788.

His constitution was not strong; and he was frequently afflicted with violent pains in his head. The fatigues and travels, occasioned by his ministerial engagements, increased his complaints. Being obliged to take a journey, in a deep snow, when he had scarcely recovered from a severe attack of his disorder, he lost his sight on the road. He could, at first, discern the light of a window; but, in less than a year, he was involved in total darkness.

Though thus shut out from one great source of improvement, he continued his ministerial labours with credit to himself and profit to his hearers. He had studied his Bible diligently before his misfortune: and, possessing a good memory, and being personally acquainted with the sorrows and joys, the doubts and duties of vital Christianity, his discourses were experimental and edifying. These repeated trials, however, prevented the extension of this society: and, during this period, the number of members continued almost unaltered: being stated, in 1786, at forty-six; and, in 1800, amounting only to forty-three. At the Association in that year, they complain that "religion was very low in some, and their minister indisposed." This indisposition increased, till Aug. 6th. 1800, when he emerged from darkness into everlasting day: leaving a widow and six small children to mourn his departure. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. S. Deacon, from Heb. 6:12.

At Kegworth the cause of Christ continued, for many years, to extend its limits. Preaching was regularly supported at five places; and, at most of them, the congregations were numerous and attentive. In 1793, a commodious place of worship was built at Long-Whatton: and, in the following year, another at Sutton-Bonington. Two young men were, in 1797, called to the ministry: Joseph Jarrom, of Diseworth, and William Smith, of Sutton-Bonington. The former went soon afterwards to the Academy, and subsequently settled at Wisbeach. Respecting Mr. Smith, there arose a considerable difference of opinion, which caused a degree of uneasiness in the society, and, in 1798, issued in the withdrawing of the friends at Sutton, with the exception of a few individuals, from the fellowship of the society at Kegworth. About the same time, a deplorable misunderstanding arose between two of the leading men in the church; which affected the whole body, and, for many years, spread its baneful influence in every direction.

This was discouraging: but, to complete their embarrassments, Mr. Tarratt, their pastor, in 1799, laid aside his office. He was now about sixty-two years of age and had been engaged in the sacred work nearly forty. His labours had been peculiarly acceptable; and made eminently useful in turning sinners to God. Indefatigable in his great work, his exertions had extended to most parts of the connection. His pulpit talents were of a superior order: a fine voice, a strong memory, a feeling heart, and a mind that naturally formed bold, clear and simple ideas. But, as he had not enjoyed the means of cultivating these excellent natural faculties, or of enriching his understanding by reading and study, his mental powers began early to decay. His youthful vivacity disappeared; his intellectual furniture was already exhausted; and his public exercises became only the shadow of what they formerly had been. Besides this, his zeal to spread the tidings of salvation had necessarily caused him, in some measure, to neglect his temporal concerns: and as, for many years, he received no remuneration for his ministerial services, and, even in the latter part of his course, but a very inadequate one, his circumstances at length

were involved in embarrassments, from which the church supposed itself unable to extricate him. To complete his misfortune, he had, a few years previous, lost his wife, an excellent woman, who had been the chief support of his domestic credit, and now he hastily formed a second union with a person whose years were thought unsuitable to his own. All these circumstances combined to create considerable dissatisfaction against him in amongst the members of the church, and he retired from his station. He withdrew, indeed, under a cloud; but those who knew him best were persuaded, that he would shine, in a better state, as the stars for ever. His secession did not restore harmony to this distracted society; a painful degree of irritation continued; and, the following Christmas, forty-five of the friends at Long-Whetton and Belton withdrew, and formed a distinct interest.

Nothing but the trunk now remained of this once flourishing church: about seventy-eight members residing at Kegworth and Diseworth: many of whom were old, and sinking into the grave. They, however, bore up under all these discouragements, and obtained what supplies they could from neighbouring ministers. In a few months, they received intimation, that Mr. William Felkin, who then laboured at Ilkiston, was likely to remove; and made application to him. He complied with their unanimous call; and, in April, 1800, settled at Kegworth.

The church at Ilkiston, which formerly had been united to Kegworth, became a distinct society, May 22d. 1785. It consisted of fifty members, who resided chiefly at Ilkiston and Smalley, and the places adjacent. Mr. Goddard was the regular preacher; and his services were so well approved by his brethren, that he was, in a few years, unanimously called to the pastoral office over them; to which he was ordained, on Whit-Monday, 1789, by Messrs. D. Taylor and B. Pollard. In the year following, a good meeting-house was erected at Smalley; which was opened about Michaelmas, by Mr. Goddard.

Harmony was maintained in this society, till the beginning of 1795; though, for two or three years, the progress of the cause had been slow. But, in that year, a charge of a very extraordinary nature was brought, by a near relative, against the pastor. This, though unsupported by any direct evidence, made a great impression on the minds of many. Mr. Goddard, thinking that some of the leading members lent too favourable an ear to this report, resigned his office, and withdrew from the church. He left things in a painful and dangerous state: the minds of the people being much agitated, and considerably dissatisfied with each other. A few supplies of ministers were obtained from the neighbouring congregations; but the principal dependance was on Mr. Felkin, one of their own members, then in his twenty-third year. Though he anxiously wished, that the former pastor should resume his office, and was deeply sensible of his own unfitness for the sacred work; yet the importunity of his friends obliged him to attempt occasionally to speak in public. In Nov. 1795, he yielded, though very reluctantly, to the unanimous solicitations of the church, and began to preach regularly. His labours were blest. The congregations increased, and it soon became necessary to erect a gallery in the meeting house at Ilkiston. Conversions were also frequent: twenty being baptized, on a profession of faith, in the course of twelve months. This success continued for several succeeding years, and the cause prospered. In 1798, Mr. Felkin spent a few months at the Academy:

and his place was kindly supplied, during his absence, by the neighbouring ministers. On his return, he resumed his labours with increased diligence and zeal. It was, however, soon apparent, that close application to his secular employment, regular preaching and long walks between the different places of worship, had injured his health. He therefore found it necessary, in order that his fatigues might be lessened, to propose a new arrangement to the church. His proposals were accepted with apparent cheerfulness: but, not long after, symptoms of dissatisfaction discovered themselves in a few individuals. These, Mr. Felkin observed: and, therefore, in the spring of 1800, accepted a call to Kegworth.

Yet, with all these discouragements, the cause of religion had prospered at Ilkiston. During this period, the members had increased to nearly three times their original number: being, in 1800, one-hundred and forty-nine. The seasons of worship were well attended; and they hoped, "that the cause of Christ was gaining a little ground amongst them."

We have been able to collect only a few particulars respecting the transactions of the church at Castle-Donington, during the period under review. It separated from Kegworth in 1785; and, for some time, enjoyed prosperity. The number of hearers was encouraging; and many were added to the church: so that, in 1788, it consisted of upwards of one hundred members. The labours of Mr. N. Pickering, their pastor, were very acceptable and useful: and his two sons, Thomas and William, began, at the request of the church, to assist in the sacred work. At Sawley, indeed, the hearers at first were few, and the prospect discouraging; but, in a few years, it improved, and there was evidence of a blessing on that attempt. At this time, they supplied once a month at Derby.

But, in 1789, Mr. W. Pickering went to reside at Ashford on the Peak: and, in the following year, his father resigned the pastoral office, and laid aside preaching. Mr. Thomas Pickering was, therefore, their only preacher; but his character and abilities were highly esteemed by his friends. In 1790 he was ordained to the pastoral office over them; when Mr. D. Taylor gave the charge to the minister.

Mr. T. Pickering fulfilled the various duties of his situation with diligence and wisdom; in a manner highly to the satisfaction to the church. To use their own expression, "the gospel was preached in purity, and with energy and affection." For some time, the effect was pleasing: no fewer than thirty being baptized, in 1792. Though the success did not continue equally great; yet there was a gradual increase: and, in 1780 the number of members amounted to one hundred and thirty-seven.

We left the church at Loughborough, in 1785, in a flourishing state, under the care of the worthy John Grimley; but this was soon interrupted by his sudden death. On Lord's-day, Aug. 5th. 1787, he preached, with unusual life and vigour, at Loughborough, Quorndon and Rothley: and the following Tuesday evening, he delivered an animated discourse at Loughborough, from 2 Tim. 4:6-8. A day or two afterwards, he was seized with violent convulsions; and though prompt medical assistance was obtained, he continued speechless till the ensuing Lord's-day, when he expired. His remains were interred in the

meeting-house at Loughborough; attended by many of his brethren in the ministry, and a numerous concourse of neighbours. His funeral sermon was preached, Aug. 26th. by Mr. S. Deacon, from Heb. 6:12. His removal was a heavy loss, not only to the church over which he presided, but also to the whole connection. He had been a principal instrument in raising the general baptist interest in the midland counties: and, for upwards of forty years, had devoted his whole powers to its service. His piety, experience and prudence had enabled him to be highly useful in the general affairs of the churches: and the prosperous state of the cause at Loughborough, when he was called to his rest, sufficiently proves the success of his labours its a minister and pastor.

The death of Mr. Grimley involved the church in great difficulties. The management of so extensive a society, and the supply of four or five regular places of worship, called for abilities and strength of which they felt themselves destitute. But they were assisted beyond their expectations. The activity and wisdom of the leading members, now called into exercise by necessity, supplied, in a great measure, the loss of a pastor, in matters of government and discipline: and two of their members, Mr. John Pollard and Mr. R. Bird were induced, by the pressure of circumstances, with the approbation of their brethren to endeavour occasionally to preach. Thus, under the divine blessing, the church was preserved from disunion and decline; and few of the places, in which the gospel had been preached, were neglected.

It was, however, thought necessary, to obtain, as soon as possible, a successor to their deceased pastor; and the eyes of the whole church were turned towards Mr. Benjamin Pollard, who had laboured amongst them, as an assistant preacher, for eight years; and was highly esteemed. He was accordingly called to the pastoral office; and publicly ordained, at Quorndon, Nov. 27th. 1787: when Mr. N. Pickering addressed the people; and Mr. S. Deacon, the minister, from John 21:13, "Feed my lambs."

In the following year, the old general baptist church at Mountsorrel, which had existed for upwards of a century, had so far declined, that the meeting-house was occupied as a hay-barn, and the burying-ground as a wood-yard; and only two or three nominal members could be discovered in the neighbourhood. The trustees of the building, therefore, cheerfully accepted the proposal of the friends at Loughborough, to repair the meeting-house, and restore it to its original use. Preaching was thus revived in this village, which is only one mile south of Quorndon, and has been hitherto continued; though the success has not been so great as in some other places. In a short time, afterwards, they began to preach, in a licensed dwelling-house, at Swithland, a village some distance west of Mountsorrel.

This increase of stations made it necessary to obtain an increase of labourers: and Mr. Thomas Truman, an assistant minister of Kirkby. Woodhouse church, was invited to settle amongst this people. With this invitation he complied and removed to Quorndon, in Dec. 1790. In the following year, the church sold the lease of the old meeting-house at Loughborough; and, having purchased a small freehold estate, erected a large view place of worship, with three galleries, a large vestry, and a commodious baptistery. The whole

expenditure was nine hundred pounds; and the building was opened, April 19th. 1792, by Messrs. D. Taylor and R. Smith.

The cause continued to extend itself. Preaching was introduced at various places, where, on account of the distance, it could not be continued. Yet regular public worship was maintained, at this time, at seven places; and at most of them the hearers were numerous. At Woodhouse-Eaves, their efforts were so successful, that the dwelling-house, in which they had hitherto preached, became too small to accommodate the increasing hearers. A new meeting-house was accordingly erected in that village, at an expenditure of three hundred pounds, which was opened, Jan. 22d. 1797.

But a very affecting providence soon cast a deep gloom over the affairs of this flourishing society. Oct. 10th 1797, Mr. Truman, their assistant minister, who had laboured amongst them with great approbation for more than six years, went to deliver an evening lecture at Loughborough. Immediately after the conclusion of the service, he set out on his return to his residence at Quorndon; and, though some of his friends offered to accompany him, on account of the darkness of the night, he declined the proposal. He had scarcely proceeded half a mile, when he met a cart; and, at the same instant, a person, supposed to be intoxicated, rode past the carriage. The darkness prevented Mr. Truman from seeing the approach of the horse; and the noise of the cart from hearing it; so that, the horse, running against him, threw him down, and severely bruised him. Some of Mr. Truman's friends immediately coming up, conveyed him back to Loughborough. Here he assisted in undressing himself, and was put to bed. He complained of a pain in his head, and a surgeon was sent for; who, after examining his bruises, declared there was no danger. In a few minutes, however, he expired. His remains were interred at Quorndon; when Mr. Smith, of Nottingham addressed a numerous and deeply affected audience, from James 4:15; and Mr. S. Deacon preached a funeral sermon, on Lord's-day, Nov. 22d., from Jer. 11:7. [Mr. Truman was a native of Nottingham, and while young, became a member of the general baptist church in that town. Here he was first called to the ministry, and preached for some time with considerable acceptance. The society at Kirkby-Woodhouse being destitute of a preacher, he settled amongst them, and his labours there were much blessed. After his removal to Quorndon, he taught a school, to which profession he had been educated. He was kind, industrious and useful as a schoolmaster, and was esteemed one of the best penmen of his age. He is thus described, by one of his surviving brethren. "Brother Truman's character, as a christian, was unimpeachable. I knew not his equal, As a husband perhaps without an equal. As a parent, most tender and affectionate. As a schoolmaster, exceedingly attentive and successful. As a member of society, universally approved. As a minister, very close in his exhortation: very firm in what he believed to be the truth; and very improving indeed. His real worth gained amazingly on the affections of the people." G. B. Mag, Vol. I. pp. 14.]

This awful stroke produced consequences of a very discouraging nature. Mr. J. Pollard had, some years previously, declined the work of the ministry; and there was now no regular preacher except Mr. B. Pollard, the pastor. The churches at Barton and Nottingham, indeed, exerted themselves honourably to lend them assistance; but the supplies thus kindly afforded were inadequate to the necessities of so large a church.

They obtained the labours of Mr. Briggs, of Gosberton, who settled amongst them, in 1799: but this measure was not so satisfactory as might have been wished. After this, a Mr. Matthewson, a methodist. preacher, professed to be convinced of the necessity of believers' baptism, and was received into this church, in Nov. 1800. He was called to exercise amongst them as a preacher; and, for some time, hopes were entertained that he would be made useful; but, being unsettled in his sentiments, he left them in less than two years.

But, in the midst of these difficulties, they continued their exertions for the good of their neighbours, as well as for their own improvement. They embraced a favourable opportunity of purchasing a piece of ground at Rothley: on which they erected a new meeting-house, in 1800, at an expence of three hundred pounds. About the same time, they licensed a dwelling-house at Wanton, in the Wolds, and their meetings were well attended. They also formed two reading societies, for their improvement knowledge: one at Loughborough, and the other at Quorndon. At the latter place, too, a sunday-school was established; which, in 1800, contained one hundred scholars. This society then extended over a large tract of country; had increased to four hundred members, who dwelt in more than thirty villages; had eight places of public worship, all which were well attended with hearers; and religion was thought to be on the advance amongst them.

The cause of religion made little progress at Leake, for several years after the commencement of this period: but, in 1794, the scene changed. The seed, which had been sown in hope, began to bring forth abundant fruit. In the course of two years, more than eighty persons were baptized, and added to the church; and the various places of worship were crowded with attentive hearers. At Broughton, a village seven miles north-east of Wimeswold, where the gospel had been preached for several years, the prospect was so encouraging, that it was determined to erect a new meeting-house, for the accommodation of the increased hearers. This was effected in 1795, at an expence of upwards of two hundred pounds.

An attempt was made, by the friends at Leake, in 1791, to introduce the gospel into Hose, a small village in the vale of Belvoir, about five miles north-east of Broughton. Appearances were, at first, very encouraging: the hearers were numerous, and several joined the church. This exasperated the enemies of religion; and a bitter spirit of persecution soon manifested itself.--Bells, horns, and the most dreadful imprecations, were employed to annoy the intruders and their abettors. The meetings were riotously broken up, and the hearers assaulted with the most opprobrious insults, as they peaceably walked the streets. Sometimes the rabble proceeded so far, as to follow them to their own houses, and break their windows. Mr. Thurman, the minister, was frequently exposed to great danger of bodily injury; but Providence preserved both him and his friends from harm. The enemies of the truth, however, gained, for the present, their object; and the attempt was suspended. This victory was celebrated by their persecutors with ringing of bells, and other demonstrations of triumph.

But the bread cast on the waters was found again after many days. In about seven years afterwards, Mr. Thomas Hoe, a native of this village, began to exercise his gifts amongst

his neighbours in prayer and exhortation; and several seemed disposed to encourage his attempts. This revived the former opposition: and every species of artful cruelty and open violence was used, to crush the rising spirit. During the time of worship, the garments of the hearers were frequently cut in pieces with knives; and, in returning, to their habitations, they were followed with volleys of stones, brickbats and dirt. Mr. Hoe, and his fellow-labourers, were repeatedly in considerable danger; yet, in defiance of all opposition, they persevered, and finally succeeded. The word preached by them was made the power of God to the conversion of several, in this den of bigotry; and the gospel still continues to be declared at Hose.

The cause had now spread itself on every side; and there were four or five stations to supply with regular preaching. Mr. Thurman, though diligent and zealous, could not occupy them all. For several years, assistance was obtained from the ministers at Nottingham; but, in 1798, it was thought necessary to endeavour to procure a regular assistant preacher. After seriously deliberating on the subject, it was resolved to invite Mr. John Bissill, of Little-Ponton, near Grantham. He was a member of the ancient general baptist society at Knipton; and had been called to the ministry by that church. In his excursions for spreading the gospel, he had penetrated as far as Hose, and shared in the labours and persecutions which attended the introduction of the word into that village. This led to an acquaintance with the friends at Broughton and the church at Leake, which issued in their requesting him to settle amongst them. He complied with their request: and, after spending some time at the Academy, fixed his residence at Wimeswould, in the spring of 1800.

Thus reinforced, the cause flourished: and this animating report was made to the ensuing Association: "We have long prayed for a revival: and now, in some branches of the church, we behold it with joy. We have public worship in five villages. Hearers in most of our places are numerous and attentive: many, we hope, feed on the bread of life. Not a few of our members are lively and active: and, upon the whole, vital religion appears to be on the advance. We hope yet to see better days than these." The number of members then was two hundred and fifty-seven.

As we have not been able to obtain any regular information respecting the church in Friar Lane, Leicester, our account of it must be very general. In 1785, a new meeting-house had been erected; and the cause of religion appeared to prosper. April 26th. 1786, Mr. John Deacon, who had for some time laboured amongst them, was ordained to the pastoral office, by Messrs. D. Taylor and W. Thompson. For several years afterwards, their seasons of public worship were well attended: and though various circumstances occurred to interrupt the harmony of the church, yet there was a constant improvement. Prayer meetings were established which produced beneficial effects; and preaching was maintained with encouraging prospects, at three or four neighbouring villages. In 1793, twenty-three persons were baptized, on a profession of faith and added to the church, and the number of members then exceeded one hundred.

But, about that period some very distressing reports were spread, which deeply affected the character of the pastor. This caused much unhappiness, and alteration in the society;

and their proceedings appear to have been marked -with too much heat and precipitancy. Many of the disaffected members were hastily excluded; and several others withdrew: so that, in 1796, the number had decreased to seventy-six. The business was brought before the Association, at Hinckley, in 1793; and, as it was a matter of considerable delicacy, it was referred to a secret committee.* The members of this committee censured the conduct of the majority, as unscriptural and disorderly: and advised them to make proper acknowledgments to the parties concerned; and endeavour to heal the breach which their proceedings had caused. Similar advice was subsequently given by various conferences; but it seems that little attention was paid to it. Complaints were, therefore, again sent to the succeeding Association; and the subject was then openly investigated. The conduct of the minority was generally approved by this meeting and a letter of reproof written to the majority. In this letter, they were admonished to follow the advice given by the former committee; and required to send delegates to the Leicestershire conference: "in order," they say, "to effect a proper understanding between us; as we cannot think of encouraging, with our approbation or connection, persons so extremely irregular in their discipline, and who do not think it necessary to satisfy their grieved brethren in a case of this nature." What effect this measure produced we are not informed: but, in 1795, Mr. J. Deacon attended the Association, as the representative of this church; when it was stated to be peaceable and tolerably happy. [* The appointing of secret Committees was highly disapproved by some of the Yorkshire churches, who protested against this mode of proceeding, at the next Association: and, we believe, that secret committees have never been resorted to, except in this instance.]

The cause of religion at Hinckley, in 1785, was flourishing at the outposts, but rather in a distracted state at head-quarters. Harmony, however, appears to have been soon established; and, for several years, they state themselves to be united and peaceable. In 1787, Mr. John Shipman, their ruling elder, was so much indisposed, as to deprive them, for some time, of his services. Yet they persevered in their endeavours to spread the tidings of salvation; and, in 1791, had three commodious meeting-houses, in which they maintained regular worship every Lord's-day; besides three licensed dwelling-houses, where, they frequently preached. But, with these multiplied labours, they complain, that few were added to the church; and evidently were in a low state.

Towards the middle of this period, Mr. Joseph Bentley, a highly esteemed member of this society, was called, by his brethren, to the work of the ministry; and, at first, his labours were very acceptable. But unhappily meeting with some socinian writings, his mind became unsettled, and his usefulness was at once terminated. His friends felt deep regret in withdrawing from him: but the honour of the truth required the measure. For some years, he wandered from one party to another; till he ceased, at length, from attending public worship in any form.

About 1794, symptoms of a revival began to appear, in several branches of this society, which, for a few years, continued to increase. They had established six distinct stations, at which they supported regular preaching: their services were well attended; and additions to the church were more frequent. but, towards the close of the century, appearances became less encouraging. In 1798, they complain "of carnal mindedness in some, want of

wisdom and charity in others, and the bad conduct of too many;" and observe that, "on the whole, their prospect was not very agreeable," Towards the close of this year, their diligent and worthy pastor, Mr. William Smith, was called to his reward. This good man, as we have formerly seen, had been very instrumental in the introduction of the general baptist cause into Longford and Hinckley: and, on the division into two churches, had become the pastor of the society at Hinckley. In that station, he diligently exerted himself for the conversion of sinners and the edification of the saints, till his decease. Though destitute of the advantages of a liberal education, he possessed strong natural faculties. The Bible was the principal subject of his study, and he obtained a good acquaintance with the doctrines and duties of christianity: being, like most of his fellow-labourers, an excellent textuary. He was regular in his attendance at conferences and Associations; and, even when the distance was great, travelled always on foot. His labours in the gospel were rendered very useful: and many, there is good reason for believing, will at last be found, on the right hand of the Judge, whom he brought into the path of life, and trained up for a blessed immortality. His death was occasioned by a mortification, which took place in his hand, and, spreading rapidly over the whole frame, in a few days terminated his life. His funeral sermon was preached, by Mr. J. Tarratt, of Keg worth, to a very crowded auditory, from Acts 20:25. He was sixty-nine years of age; more than forty of which had been laboriously employed in the christian ministry.

The church being now destitute of a pastor, and learning that Mr. Joseph Freeston, who was then labouring at Wisbeach, had some intentions of removing, sent a messenger to him, to enquire into the true state of affairs; and, if there appeared an opening, to invite him to Hinkley. After mature deliberation, he consented to their unanimous request; and, removing in July, 1799, took the oversight of this church. At that time, it consisted of one hundred and forty-four members: and regular preaching was maintained at Hinckley, Thurlaston, Wolvey, and Witheybrook; besides occasional services at Dunton, Ullesthorpe and a few other places.

At the close of the last period, the church at Longford was left without a pastor, but very desirous of obtaining one. This desire continued: and, in 1786, they applied to the Association for advice, respecting the propriety of inviting Mr. Freeston to remove from Wisbeach and settle with them. That meeting, after debating on the subject, as seriously and impartially as possible, concluded, that "it would be most for the good of souls and the glory of God, for Mr. Freeston to remain at Wisbeach." Thus discouraged as to this object, they turned their eyes towards Mr. Thomas Pickering, who had lately begun to preach at Castle-Donington; and, the year following, asked the advice of the Association on the subject; when a large majority declared in favour of his removing to Longford.

For some reason, however, with which we are unacquainted, the negociation did not then succeed. And, in 1788, the, Association repeated its recommendation of the same measure, with as little effect.

Not being able to obtain Mr. T. Pickering, the friends at Longford applied to Mr. R. Folds, the pastor of the church at Burnley, in Lancashire; who removed to them, in March, 1789. They now cherished sanguine hopes, that they should enjoy those

privileges and benefits, of which they had been so long deprived, through the want of a pastor. This Inspired them with renewed zeal; and the cause appeared to revive: their hearers increased: and, in a few months, eighteen were added to their society. But all these pleasing scenes suddenly vanished. Mr. Fold's temper and conduct were inconstant and irregular; and, in less than a year, he left them.

This plunged the church into new difficulties; and the natural effects ensued. Disunion and altercation among themselves, and want of proper ministerial supplies, checked the progress of the cause, and thinned their congregations: many even of their own members, seldom attending at their places of worship; but seeking that edification among other denominations which they could not enjoy in their own. From this discouraging state, they were, in some degree, relieved, in 1791; when Mr. J. Cramp, a member of the church, was encouraged, by his brethren, to exercise his gifts as a preacher. This he did to their satisfaction, and continued to labour amongst them with increasing acceptance. From this time, the prospect began to brighten, and the union and peace of the church were gradually restored. Another of their friends was soon after called to the work of the ministry, and became acceptable as an occasional preacher: while Mr. Cramp's services grew every day more useful. In 1797, they say, "We are well attended with hearers have of late experienced a considerable revival and have a pleasing prospect before us." Their hopes were not disappointed; as, in the two succeeding years, nearly forty persons appear to have been added to their number. Their reports continued encouraging, till 1800; when the members amounted to one hundred and thirty and they had a few candidates for baptism.

Throughout the whole of this period, this church maintained regular preaching at two places at some distance from Longford, and were well attended with hearers.

At the commencement of the period now under review, the society which had been formed at Sutton-Coldfield, assumed the title of the church at Birmingham, from having established an interest in that populous town. There appears, indeed, to have been a few general baptists at Birmingham ever since the time of the Commonwealth; but they had almost vanished, when Mr. Austin and his friends began to preach at Sutton-Coldfield. These zealous christians soon extended their labours to Birmingham; and several of the inhabitants joined them. In 1772, they had increased to seventeen; when, wishing more frequently to hear the gospel, they hired a room in Park-street; but afterwards removed to a more commodious one in Needless-alley. Here Mr. Austin occasionally preached, and not without some success, during the whole of his residence at Sutton-Coldfield.

In 1784, Providence led Mr. Joseph Green, a worthy member and all occasional preacher in Mr. Austin's church, to settle at Birmingham. Soon after his removal, he was seized with a severe indisposition, and laid aside from his temporal engagements. During this affliction, he formed the design of endeavouring to erect a building, for the purpose of preaching the word of life to his careless neighbours. On his recovery, he, in concert with Mr. Austin, began in good earnest to prosecute the design; and a neat and commodious meeting-house was soon raised, in Lombard-street, Deritend; which was opened, Sept. 1786.

But soon after the completion of the building, they were deprived of their minister, by Mr. Austin's removal to London. In this emergency, every eye was turned to Mr. Green, who had been their principal friend, and whose past services in the sacred work had been much blessed. They, therefore, earnestly requested him to become their regular minister; and, thinking himself called upon by Providence, to attempt to support the cause, he complied with their wishes. Through the whole of this period, he diligently laboured for this society, and carefully watched over its interests; though, probably owing to his extreme modesty, he was never ordained to the pastoral office.

Mr. Green received important assistance, in the ministry of the word, from Mr. W. Taylor, a member of Sutton-Coldfield church, who then resided at Wolverhampton, and had, for some time, been acceptably employed in the ministry. His labours were frequent and useful, both at Sutton and Birmingham, till 1796; when he was dismissed, to take the charge of the church at Boston. In that year, also, the cause sustained a heavy loss, in the death of Mr. William Cotterell. This pious young man had discovered great concern for the prosperity of Zion, and was highly esteemed for his activity, zeal and prudence in the affairs of religion. He had likewise begun to exercise his gifts as a preacher, to the great satisfaction of his friends; who looked forwards, with sanguine hopes, to his future eminence and usefulness. But all these expectations were disappointed: he died, Nov. 7th 1796, in the twenty-sixth year of his age. To supply these breaches Mr. Yates soon after removed to Birmingham; and it was hoped that it might contribute to the advancement of religion.

The cause of Christ had thus far been carried on in concert: but, towards the close of the present period, symptoms of discord began to appear, which, in 1800, terminated in a separation into two distinct societies, known afterwards as the Birmingham and Sutton-Coldfield churches. The former, at the time of the division, consisted of forty-one members; and the latter, of thirty. three. At the ensuing Association, the friends at Birmingham blessed God that they were in a peaceable state: and expressed their cheerful hopes, that their loss of members would be supplied by the accession of fresh converts, who would adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

The admission of Mr. Robert Smith into the fellowship of the church at Nottingham, had a happy effect on the prosperity of the cause in that town. Minister and people became better known and more respected by their observant neighbours: the church was more regularly organized, proper officers being chosen and discipline improved. The natural effect was all increase of hearers; and additions to the society became more frequent. On July 30th. 1786, no fewer than thirty-two persons were baptized, on a profession of faith, before thousands of spectators, in the river Trent.

For upwards of two years after Mr. Smith's removal, the pastors of neighbouring churches were invited to administer the Lord's supper to this people. But their satisfaction with their minister strengthening, and the evidence of his, usefulness daily increasing, they became anxious for a closer union, and pressed him to accept the pastoral office among them. This he at first declined, through a deep sense of the importance and

difficulty of the sacred office; but a sense of duty and a desire to promote the welfare of the church, at length induced him to yield a trembling assent. He was ordained, April 1st. 1788: when Mr. W. Thompson, of Boston, gave the charge to the minister, from 1 Tim. 4:6; and Mr. D. Taylor, of London, addressed the people, from Phil. 4:3. This was a good day to the friends of the gospel: and the union then formed, has been eminently blest by the great Head of the church,--About this time, five or six meetings, for religious conversation and experience were established in various parts of the town, and two leaders appointed over each: a plan which greatly promoted the interest of vital religion.

Thus settled in gospel order, they extended the field of labour and maintained regular preaching at Cresswell, Aslocton and Thurgaton; places at ten or twelve miles distance. But they still continued to complain of coldness and disorder; and, though many were frequently added to the church, yet, the number of exclusions and deaths being for some time, nearly equal, the real increase was small. In 1792, however, the state of affairs began to improve; and they informed the Association, that, "notwithstanding some disagreeable circumstances, the church was peaceable and happy; and as well established as at any former period: their hearers were increasing, and they had ten candidates for baptism." They commenced preaching, also, about this time, at Arnold and Basford. At most of their meetings in the neighbouring villages they were well attended with hearers and at Thurgaton and Basford, the word preached had considerable success.

The church and congregation continued to increase; and, in a few years, the meeting-house became too small to accommodate them. It was also thought by many to be in a very ineligible situation; and, by its obscurity and incommodiousness, materially to retard the progress of the cause. Towards the end of this period, therefore, a piece of ground was purchased, in a respectable part of tile town: and a very convenient and spacious meeting-house erected, at an expence of nearly two thousand pounds. This was opened, Nov. 9th. 1799, by Messrs. B. Pollard and W. Felkin: the former preached in the morning and afternoon, from 1 Kings 9:3, and Haggai 2:7; and the latter, in tile evening, from Psalm 89:15, 16. More than a thousand persons, it is supposed, assembled on each part of the day; and a serious joy was depicted on every countenance. Nearly eighty pounds were collected on the occasion. Several hundred pounds had been previously raised, by the zealous and liberal exertions of the members of this society and the friends of religion in the town, towards this great work; and many in the sister churches generously lent their assistance.

The hopes of the friends were happily realized. The number of hearers increased, and the prospect of future success was very encouraging. In the succeeding year, eighteen were added by baptism, and the members of the church were two hundred and eighty-five.

During this period, several persons were called to the work of the ministry; most of whom we shall probably have occasion to notice in the next chapter.

In 1785, we left the church at Kirkby-Wood-house in a very low state.* It continued to decline till, in 1787, the members were reduced to seventeen. In the spring of that year, Mr. Truman, whose affecting death we have already recorded, was dismissed from the

church at Nottingham to serve this drooping interest. The labours of this pious young man were remarkably blest. Before the next Association, eighteen persons were added to the church by baptism: their seasons of preaching were well attended, and the members united and happy. Several were waiting for fellowship, and others were seriously inquiring the way to Zion. During this summer, Mr. George Hardstaff, a member of this society, chiefly through the encouragement and assistance of Mr. Truman, was called to the work of the ministry, and became very useful in preaching the gospel. They now extended their labours, and introduced themselves into Sutton-in-Ashfield, a small place about three miles distance from Kirkby-Woodhouse; and, occasionally, visited Mansfield, a large and populous town, five miles to the east.

[* A few particulars respecting the introduction of the General Baptist cause into Kirkby-Woodhouse, having lately come to hand, we present on our readers with the substance of them.--John Alvey, an inhabitant of this place, accidentally heard Stephen Dixon preach on Selstone Green, and felt desirous of knowing more of his doctrine. When therefore the preacher came again into the neighbourhood, he determined to go and hear him; and, calling on G. Allen, his intimate acquaintance, informed him of his design. "What," exclaimed his friend, "art thou going to hear that fool?" Mr. Alvey repeated his resolution; and invited the other to accompany him. Prompted, most probably, by curiosity, Mr. Allen assented; and, from that time, both the friends became firmly attached to the cause. They soon invited the ministers to Kirkby: and Mr. Allen opened his house for the preaching of the gospel. This led to the erection of a meeting-house in 1755. The friends of the cause here, experienced their share of the persecution to which its first advocates were exposed.-In. 1749, S. Dixon, while preaching at Moorgreen, a few miles from Kirkby, was seized by the mob, dragged to a neighbouring pond, and put under the water. Several of his followers held farms and houses under Lord Melbourn; and through the ill-will of a neighbour, who was under-steward to his Lordship, were driven from their possessions, on account of their religion. The clergyman of the parish being a violent enemy to the baptists, took every opportunity to harass them. He endeavoured to frighten or persuade the less informed to take their children to be sprinkled; and would probably have succeeded in some instances, had not their more intelligent friends interfered. This drew down his vengeance on them: and he threatened to prosecute John Alvey, in the spiritual court, for teaching school without a licence; but was deterred by an appeal, through Mr. Booth, to the Deputies appointed to protect the civil rights of Dissenters. He refused to sign necessary certificates in their favour, took measures to dispossess them of their tenures, and used every effort to prevent them from administering the ordinance of baptism according to their own views. One summer, having a few candidates for baptism, and being shut out from the place to which they usually resorted on such occasions, they went several miles upon the forest to a fish pond. From this accommodation they were driven, after some debate, by the gamekeeper of the gentleman to whom it belonged. Undismayed by repeated disappointments, they travelled five miles farther, till they found another pool of water, where they administered the sacred ordinance. But the most distressing persecution which these professors suffered from the persevering enmity of this man, was his constant endeavours to entice away their youth, by presents, feasts, and other allurements, by putting some of them to school, and using every art to prejudice them against the religion, and even the

persons of their parents. By these means he succeeded, in some instances, in totally estranging the affections of the children from their disconsolate parents. Yet these christians bore all this opposition and affliction with patience and firmness, and many of them bore a dying testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of God.]

But the progress of the cause soon received a serious check, by the removal of Mr. Truman; who, at Christmas, 1789, accepted an invitation from the flourishing society at Loughborough. The disorderly conduct of some of the members increased the effect; and, for some years, the number decreased. Their congregation however continued to be considerable: Mr. Hardstaffs ministry became daily more acceptable, both to his own friends and to strangers. Towards the close of this period, the prospect brightened; and, in 1799, besides Kirkby they maintained regular preaching in four neighbouring places: Sutton-in-Ashfield, Hucknall, Tarkard and Brunsley. At all these places, they were well attended; but, at the last two the appearance was peculiarly encouraging. The church was united and peaceable, and the interest of the Redeemer evidently on the advance.

Mr. Hardstaff, being thus blest in his ministerial labours, was called to the pastoral office; to which he was ordained, Aug. 14th.. 1799. On this occasion, Mr. Smith delivered the introductory discourse Mr. B. Pollard gave the charge to the minister; and Mr. S. Deacon addressed the church.--In June 1800, the number of members was sixty-three.

We conclude this section by noticing several churches in the midland counties, which, though not immediately derived from the original society, became, during this period, members of the New Connection. These were the churches at Gamston and Retford, at Derby and at Ashford on the Peak, Derbyshire.

The person who first introduced the general baptist cause into the neighbourhood of Gamston, was Aaron Jeffery. He appears to have been connected in early life, with the ancient churches of that denomination at Collingham and Misterton; which had probably been formed prior to the Restoration, and shared in all the persecutions which followed that event. In his neighbourhood, was the seat of the earl of Clare, a nobleman of liberal sentiments; and Aaron, when yet a young man, determined to seek a situation in his family. He accordingly applied: and, being asked whether he had brought a character, answered, "No; but I am a general baptist." The earl, it seems, thought this a sufficient certificate, and immediately engaged him as a footman. In this situation, he continued many years and his steadiness, integrity and civility gave great satisfaction to his employer, and procured himself great respect. One circumstance indeed, for a time, grieved the tender conscience of this pious youth. He was frequently employed, by his master, in carrying messages to a distance, on a Lord's-day.' This he felt was inconsistent with his duty to his heavenly Master; and he resolved, at all events, to decline it. When, therefore he was again called into the parlour, on the Lord's-day morning, and ordered to go on business to a neighbouring town, he replied, in a manly, though respectful tone, "My Lord, I stand ready to obey your orders six days in the week; but this day I have greater Master than you to serve." Instead of being irritated at the freedom of his servant, this nobleman mildly replied, "Have you? Why then go and serve him:" and treated him afterwards with increased confidence.

Aaron being now at full liberty to follow the dictates of his own conscience, regularly walked on the Lord's-day morning, from Houlton-hall to Collingham, a distance of twelve miles, to join in the worship of God with his friends. He usually attended as a hearer; but, in cases of necessity, ascended the pulpit in his gold-lace livery, both at Collingham and Misterton, and preached with considerable acceptance. One morning, as he was on the road to Collingham, he met his master, who enquired whither he was going. On being informed of the object and length of his journey, the earl gently reproached him: "Aaron," said he, "why do you not take one of my horses?" at the same time, desiring that in future he would ride whenever he thought proper.

After having lived as footman for several years, he married; and his master, unwilling to part with a servant whom he so highly esteemed, appointed him the keeper of his park, and placed him at Houlton-lodge, about three miles front Gamston. Here he continued to serve his patron with integrity for many years; till a change in his Lordship's circumstances rendered his service no longer necessary. On this event, he took a farm, which was then vacant at Gamston, and removed thither, with a wife and six children. No sooner was he established in his new situation, than he began to hold meetings for prayer and exhortation, in his own house: and engaged zealously in conducting them. These opportunities were well attended, and made very useful; and laid the foundation of the future church at Gamston. After having attained a good old age, Mr. Jeffery, and his worthy consort were called to their reward, within a few hours of each other: he dying Nov. 23d. 1729; and she the following day. Their remains were interred together in Gamston church-yard.

His youngest son Joseph, then twenty-seven years of age, succeeded to his farm. This worthy and pious youth was baptized not long after the death of his venerable father, and joined the church at Collingham. He continued the meetings in his own house; and obtained a licence for it under the Toleration Act. Neighbouring ministers were invited to preach for them, and the number of hearers gradually increased; so that, in less than eight years, the house became too small to accommodate them. He determined, therefore, to build a meeting-house on his own farm; and waited on his landlord, the duke of Newcastle, to solicit his permission. Having obtained this, he imparted his design to a few of his friends: who entered heartily into his views. By their joint exertions, a convenient place of worship was erected, and opened in 1741. Previous to that time, Mr. Joseph Jeffery had begun to preach and baptize at Gamston; and afterwards he appears, to have acted as pastor to the society which he had collected. Till 1763, he laboured alone; but in that year, Mr. John Dossey was chosen co-pastor with him.

This union strengthened their hands, and they extended their labours to several neighbouring places: especially to Ashford in Derbyshire, where their generous interference was made very useful. They likewise introduced the general baptist cause into Retford; in which town a very respectable branch of their interest was soon raised. They pursued their sacred work with diligence, zeal and success: and, though all their exertions in the ministry were gratuitous, yet a good Providence blest even their temporal concerns. But, in 1778, Mr. Dossey ceased from his labours, in his sixty-third year. His

remains were interred in the meeting house; and Mr. D. Taylor was invited to preach his funeral sermon.

The work of the ministry and care of the church now devolved wholly on Mr. Jeffery, who was already stooping under the burden of age. In this time of trial, he found a very useful assistant in Mr. R. Bellamy, a worthy and pious member of this society; who, though not possessed of shining abilities, was well qualified to conduct the affairs of the church. Messrs. D. Taylor, W. Thompson, A. Booth, and G. Boyce, the old friends of Mr. Jeffery, used frequently, when on their journeys, to preach for him. Thus, for some time, the cause was, in a good degree, supported; but, as Mr. Jeffery's infirmities increased, it was found necessary to seek for more permanent supply. After due consideration, the church invited Mr. Jonathan Scott, an occasional preacher at Queenshead, in Yorkshire, to be the colleague of their venerable minister. This invitation he accepted; and, removing to Gamston, in 1785, he was ordained, May, 1786, to the office of joint-pastor with Mr. Jeffery.

When Mr. Scott settled at Gamston, the church consisted of only fifty-seven members, and the cause was in a declining state. But he was a man of a zealous and persevering spirit, of an affable and engaging conduct, and of a strong constitution. He laboured strenuously and affectionately: was earnest in his public ministrations, and diligent in exhorting from house to house. He exerted himself to procure the reparation of the meeting-house, which had fallen considerably into decay; and, by his example, inspired the friends of the Redeemer with new zeal and vigour. His efforts were crowned with considerable success, in reviving the interest in this neighbourhood; and his frequent visits to the churches in Lincolnshire, especially Misterton and Kirton, were rendered highly useful. Though differing considerably from his worthy colleague in his views of several important doctrines, yet they cordially united in their, endeavours to promote the salvation of sinners and the glory of God. In 1786, this church applied for admission into the New Connection; and the following year was unanimously received.

The cause continued to advance. In 1790, they informed the Association, that, "at no former period, had their church been so unanimous, nor the cause of Christ so prosperous, as it then was," In the preceding year, twenty-one had been baptized; and the members had increased to ninety-five. But, in a few years, a dark cloud overspread these bright prospects.

Mr. Jeffery, their senior pastor, sunk under the weight of years, March 14th. 1794, at the advanced age of ninety: and Mr. Scott, though a much younger man, fell a victim to a disease which baffled the power of medicine, July 24th. following, in his fifty-fifth year. Thus bereaved, in the course of a few months, of both its pastors, the widowed society owed much to the pious and friendly care of Messrs. Bellamy and Shipston; who were active in keeping open the meetings, and preserving the members from wandering. Supplies were invited from various neighbouring churches; and Messrs. Rogers, Hardstaff, Briggs, Ellis and John Smedley, in succession spent some time amongst them. The members, however, were desirous of obtaining a regular minister; and, being almost equally well satisfied with each of these five ministers, they resolved to refer the choice

to the casting of lots. The lot fell on Mr. John Smedley, who had been previously recommended to them by the Association. They requested him to settle with them; and he removed from Melbourn to Retford, Oct. 1795.

Soon afterwards, Mr. Shipston and Mr. Skidmore were called to assist in preaching the gospel, and the cause appeared to gain ground. But, at the close of this period, some discouraging circumstances occurred; and religion, as they express it, "appeared to be at a stand." The number of members, in 1800, was seventy-five.

Derby is an ancient and respectable town, containing nearly eleven thousand inhabitants. Mr. D. Taylor, being on a journey, had occasion to pass through this place, May 31st. 1789; and was induced to preach, on Willow Row, near the place where the meeting-house now stands, from Luke 2:10, "I bring you good tidings of great joy." This attempt encouraged Messrs. N. and T. Pickering, of Castle-Donington, to visit Derby, and preach several times at the same place. It seems, that these first essays were made in the open air: but there being some appearance of attention, a room was hired, at the joint expence of some members of the neighbouring churches; and regular preaching commenced. Circumstances soon rendering it inconvenient for the ministers from Castle-Donington to carry on the undertaking, the church at Melbourn stepped forwards to support it. Messrs. F. Smith and J. Smedley, assisted occasionally by Mr. Goddard, of Ilkiston attended in rotation at the stated times of preaching, till the close of the following year. But, as the prospect of eventual success still appeared doubtful, the case was referred, at Christmas, 1790, to a Conference at Cauldwell. That meeting, unwilling to relinquish the attempt engaged the churches at Castle-Donington and Ilkiston to furnish a supply of preachers, for a limited time. Their perseverance was crowned with success: several persons soon afterwards professing repentance and faith, and desiring to enjoy the privileges of church members. The subject was submitted to the consideration of the Conference at Smalley, July 5th. 1791; when it was thought most prudent, that the candidates should be formed into a distinct church, and not received as members of any adjacent society. Accordingly, Messrs. F. Smith, Thomas Pickering and J. Smedley visited Derby, Aug. 21st. 1791, and baptized nine persons, whom they formed into a church state. The ministers from Kegworth, Castle-Donington, Ilkiston, and Melbourn united in maintaining regular preaching on the Lord's-days, and a weekday-evening lecture once a fortnight. Their labour of love was not in vain: before the next Association the members had increased to twenty-three.

For several years, the cause continued to be thus supported, by the disinterested assistance of the neighbouring churches; and gradually extended. Preaching was introduced into Alvaston, a village about three miles from Derby, in a small meeting-house belonging to the Presbyterians; and the attendance, at first, was encouraging. before 1796, the members of this infant society had increased to forty. But it then began to decline. Difference of sentiment on doctrinal points arose among some of the leading persons and disorderly conduct in others gave great occasion of offence. Several withdrew, and others were excluded; so that, in 1799, the members had sunk to twenty-eight, the congregations had awfully decreased, and the society appeared to be hastening to a dissolution. The midland Conference, anxious to preserve the interest in so

populous a town, took the subject into serious consideration; and, judging that a constant and resident minister might be more successful than occasional supplies, they engaged Mr. James Taylor, of Queenshead, who had just left the Academy, to make the trial. He took up his residence at Derby in 1800. At that time there were thirty members.

During the whole of the period now under review, the general baptist church at Ashford, on the Peak, Derbyshire, stood a member of the New, Connection. This ancient society was probably founded during the Protectorate of Cromwell. At the close of the seventeenth century it appears to have been in a flourishing state, and extended over most of the neighbouring villages; but its principal stations were at Ashford, Wardlaw, Blackwell, Monsaldale and Puttyhill. Two burying-grounds then belonged to it; one at Ashford, and the other at Blackwell, five miles north-eastward. About that time, Mr. Samuel White and Mr. Mason, two very worthy members of this church, began to preach; and, for a long time, were diligently and successfully engaged in the sacred work. Mr. White was eminent for his abilities and piety, his affection for the cause of religion, and his zeal to promote it. As he was possessed of some property, he could devote great part of his time to his favourite object; and was in the constant habit of riding over the bleak mountains of the Peak, to distant places, to publish the glad tidings of salvation, or to transact the affairs of the churches. He died Oct. 17th. 1727, aged forty-seven years. Mr. Mason's exertions appear to have been more circumscribed, being chiefly confined to Blackwell and its vicinity. [We have satisfactory evidence of the existence of a number of general baptist churches, in these parts of Derbyshire and the adjoining districts of Cheshire and Staffordshire; which, at the commencement of the seventeenth century, were in a flourishing state, held annual Associations amongst themselves, and appear to have cultivated a great degree of mutual harmony. We are sorry that we have not been able to obtain any authentic details of their transactions: but possibly this notice may bring some original documents to light. Their sentiments, on some of the most important points of doctrine, may be collected from the writings of Mr. Samuel Acton, of Nantwich, who was a leading man among these professors, and frequently appointed to preach at their Associations. But they are more clearly stated in an agreement which the church at Nantwich made with Mr. Isaac Kimber, when they engaged him to assist their pastor. After assigning their reasons for inviting him, and stipulating what salary they proposed to allow him, it proceeds to state that this contract is to continue "so long as he approves himself to be a studious and useful minister, by preaching sound doctrine twice every Lord's-day, in the place of the church's assembling; particularly maintaining, on all necessary occasions, according to the holy scripture, the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which he subsisted as the only begotten of the Father before the world was; and that he is God, God over all, as the scripture saith: and will not at any time deny, nor assert the contrary, either in the course of his ministry or conversation. Also, the universal love of God to man--general redemption by Jesus Christ--the baptizing of believers only on their profession of faith--and the necessity of holiness to the end." This agreement is dated July 1th. 1724, and signed by Mr. Acton and twenty-eight others.]

After their decease, the cause declined rapidly, and there was, for many years, a great interruption of social intercourse amongst the various branches of this extended society. Scattered in distant villages, with no shepherd to collect the rambling flock, and no public

ordinances to draw them together, they grew strangers to each others' concerns; the bond of union was broken, and, at length, they nearly forgot each others' existence. In this state of apathy, Mr. Israel Cotton, pastor of the general baptist society in the Isle of Axholmel, visited his friends on the Peak, of which country he was a native. Pitying their situation, he collected a few of them together and preached for them several times, at a house in Monsaldale. The appearance of things inspired him with hopes, that this drooping interest might yet be revived; and, on his return, calling on Mr. Jeffery of Gainston, he communicated to him the particulars of his visit.

[** In 1701, the notorious Titus Oates presented this church with various books; amongst which were Poole's Annotations and Limborch's Body of Divinity, which are still preserved. What connection this extraordinary man had with the society at Ashford cannot now be ascertained; and, as his character is well known, this circumstance might have been passed over in silence, had not our most popular historians generally aggravated the list of his real or supposed crimes, by suggesting that he was anabaptist. It may, therefore, be esteemed the part of candour, to state the facts: especially as there is great reason to believe that the professors with whom he was twice connected were general baptists. He was, it is probable, the son of Mr. S. Oates, mentioned in the former part of this work, as the co-adjutor of Mr. T. Lamb of Coleman-street. In his youth, he had been a member of the baptist church in Pennington-street, under Mr. I. Lamb; but soon forsook them and went into the establishment. After a while, he professed to be converted to popery, went over to one of the catholic seminaries abroad, and some say entered into the order of the Jesuits. In the reign of Charles II. he returned to England, where for many years, he kept the nation in a state of great alarm with reports of dreadful plots to introduce popery. In the following reign, he was convicted on several charges of perjury; and most severely and ignominiously punished. He outlived the Revolution; and received a pension of four hundred per annum from the court, till his death, in 1705. These particulars being well known to every reader of the English history, we need not enlarge. In the latter part of his life, he again sought fellowship with the society of which he had formerly been a member; but the character of his public life, made the leaders of that church extremely cautious in listening to his overtures. At length, overcome by the apparent penitence and humility of his conduct, and his earnest protestations of sincerity, they, after three years investigation, reluctantly admitted him, and for a short time, he was employed in the ministry. But it was soon too manifest, that his disposition for intrigue and love of mischief retained their full power over him; and after causing much confusion and distress, he was finally excluded from the communion of the church. He endeavoured to revenge himself for this step by involving a principal member in prosecutions, &c. but his cruel designs were ultimately defeated.--It was certainly no honour for any body of christians to be connected with Titus Oates; but whatever infamy attaches to the baptists on this account must be shared by the churches of England and Rome of which he was a member much longer than he was with them, and which do not appear to have proceeded with such cautious jealousy in receiving him as the baptists did. Humes's Hist. of England, chap. lxvii, and lxx. Crosby's Baptists, Vol. III. pp. 164-182.]

That zealous minister was much affected with the relation; and determined to take a journey to the Peak himself. He accordingly went; and his reception was such as

encouraged him to persevere. Though Ashford is forty miles from Gamston, he and his worthy colleague, Mr. Dossey, agreed to pay this neglected people a monthly visit. They went alternately, without any remuneration; and if indisposition prevented either of them from taking his turn, he defrayed the expences of his friend, who went in his stead.

These disinterested exertions were crowned with success. The friends of the cause were collected, and some attention excited among the neighbours; but they had no place of worship. Their kind patrons, however, generously resolved to complete their undertaking. A piece of ground was purchased, adjoining to the burying-ground in Ashford-lane, nearly a mile from the town: a situation chosen probably for the accommodation of the friends who dwelt in the adjacent villages. On this ground, a small meeting-house was erected, almost wholly at the expence of Messrs. Jeffery and Dossey: the former advancing, in the first instance, thirty pounds; and the latter, forty. Mr. Jeffery had the pulpit and pews prepared in the neighbourhood of Gamston, and employed his own waggon in conveying all the materials to the building. The edifice was soon finished, and, in 1761, opened by Mr. Boyce. In order to crown the whole, Mr. Jeffery purchased three acres of land, which lay contiguous to the meeting-house, and built a dwelling-house; which he designed for the accommodation of the minister.

Mr. Jeffery having given such unequivocal proofs of his regard for this society was desired to procure a suitable person to become their regular minister. He recommended to their choice, Mr. Benjamin Fox, a member of Gamston church, who removed to them before the chapel was fully completed. He confined his stated labours to Ashford, but the congregations continued to be small. After an experiment of five years, he relinquished all hopes of being useful, and returned to his former connections. He was succeeded by Mr. William Kelsey, who probably came from Lincolnshire, and settled at Ashford, about 1766. But his talents were not popular, and his success was discouraging. After labouring here for twelve years, and observing the cause decline under his care, he removed to Knipton. His departure accelerated the decay which had been gradually advancing during the whole period of his ministry; and the total dissolution of the society appeared to be rapidly approaching.

In this extremity, the remaining friends of the cause applied for assistance to the New Connection; and were visited by several ministers from Yorkshire and the midland counties. Desirous of saving this sinking interest, a plan was formed for affording it a regular supply; which began to be executed in 1779. A minister visited them once a month, and remained with them as long as circumstances rendered it convenient: Sometimes two or three Lord's-days; but frequently no more than one. In 1782, this society, which then consisted of only ten members, was admitted into the New Connection. In the following year, the members increased to fifteen. Regular preaching, was then maintained at Ashford and Wardlaw, and the attendance was as numerous as could be expected. On those Lord's-days when no minister was present, the members met as usual; and endeavoured to fill up the time by singing, prayer, and reading the scriptures, or occasionally a sermon.

The distance of this small society from those churches which furnished its ministerial supplies, rendered it highly desirable to all parties, that it should have a resident preacher. In 1786, an attempt was made to obtain the removal of Mr. John Taylor from Queenshead to Ashford. This minister had paid them an annual visit for many preceding years, and evinced himself their sincere friend. They had, therefore, formed an affectionate attachment to him; and proposed the subject to the Association, in 1787: but that meeting was decidedly against Mr. Taylor's compliance with their wishes. In the following year, Mr. W. Pickering, who had lately been called to the ministry by the church at Castle-Donington, visited Ashford where his labours were acceptable and useful five persons being baptized in the course of the year. They therefore invited him to settle amongst them; which he did in 1789, and became their regular minister. Symptoms of a revival continued to appear. Preaching was regularly maintained, not only at the meeting-house, but also at Wardlaw. A room was licensed in the town of Ashford.. in which weekly lectures were delivered: and a door opening for introducing their cause at Bradwell, a populous village, eight miles to the north of Ashford, the opportunity was promptly seized. For some time, Mr. Pickering preached on the evening of the Lord's day, in the place of worship belonging to the methodists at Bradwell, and the hearers were numerous. It soon became necessary to leave this place and look for another, and a large barn was procured; where many attended with apparent seriousness. The barn however was likely soon to be wanted; and was deemed expedient to attempt to raise a meetinghouse. A piece of ground, in an eligible situation, was soon obtained, and a small building erected; which was opened, Oct. 1790. For a time, the prospect was encouraging, the hearers numerous and several appeared to receive the word with joy. Many attended the means of grace at Bradwell from Abney, a village two miles distance; and preaching was soon after introduced into that place, with sanguine expectations of success. But, after persevering in the attempt for many years, these expectations were, in a great measure disappointed; probably owing to the distance of Mr. Pickering's residence from the scene of his labour.

For a long series of years, the members of this society had never enjoyed the privilege of sitting down at the Lord's table, except when they were favoured with the occasional presence of the pastor of a sister church. They felt and lamented their loss in this respect, and began earnestly to wish for more regular returns of these solemn opportunities: but they never imagined, that an unordained preacher ought to administer that sacred ordinance. They therefore all united in an earnest and affectionate invitation to Mr. Pickering to become their pastor. After much deliberation and prayer for divine direction, he consented to their request, and the ordination took place, April 6th. 1794. As the members of this church were few and poor, and could not support the expence of inviting several ministers to assist on this occasion: and, as both the people and their pastor were much attached to Mr. John Taylor, they had invited him to undertake the whole of the sacred work: and, after consulting several experienced brethren in the ministry, he had yielded to their importunity. He therefore conducted the whole of the services: delivered a long introductory discourse, offered all the prayers, put the questions to the church and minister, received the confession of faith, gave the charge to the pastor, from 2 Tim. 4:5, and addressed the people, from Luke 3:14. "Perhaps few services of this kind," says an

eyewitness of the interesting transaction, "have been conducted with greater solemnity, punctuality, affection and fidelity."

The cause appeared to revive much after this union had taken place. In 1796, eighteen persons were added to the church by baptism, and the number of members increased to forty-three. But this appears to have been only a transient gleam, and the clouds quickly returned. Disputes among themselves, and the disorderly conduct of too many of the members, soon reduced their numbers, and thinned their congregations, especially at Bradwell. In 1800, the members were reduced to twenty-three, "religion appeared at a stand, and the prospect was gloomy." This gloom was increased, by the loss of their pastor; who, this year, accepted an invitation to Ilkiston, and left Ashford, Aug. 14th.

We close this section by observing, that, notwithstanding several partial depressions, the general baptist cause, in the midland counties, had made great progress during this second period. In 1785, there were twelve churches, consisting of scarcely one thousand, six hundred members; but, in 1800, the churches had increased to twenty two, and, the members to two thousand six hundred. How far real godliness and vital religion had kept pace with this external prosperity, the reader will form his own opinion, from the details we have presented to his consideration.

SECT. 2.-The Transactions of the General Baptist Churches in the Northern District, during the Second Fifteen Years after the Formation of the New Connection.

We left the church at Birchcliff in a state of Progressive improvement, under the care of Mr. J. Sutcliffe. The congregation continued to increase: and, in a few years, it was found necessary to consider how they could be accommodated; the old meeting-house having become much too small. Some of the friends, disliking the lonely situation of the original building, thought that the cause might be benefited by pulling it down, and erecting another, in the neighbourhood either of Heptonstall or Hebdenbridge; while others warmly disapproved of a change of place. As they could not agree, they proposed the subject to the Association, in 1792; which advised them to defer building till they were more unanimous in their views. They soon after laid aside the scheme of removing, and provided for the increased congregation, by taking down the gallery of their old meeting-house, which was narrow and only in front; and erecting a spacious one, on three sides of the building. This was completed in 1793, at an expence of upwards of one hundred pounds.

But the cause does not appear to have advanced much for several years after this alteration. For, though they were well attended with hearers, the members gradually decreased, and they complain of the low state of vital religion amongst them.

This probably was partly caused by the weak state of Mr. Sutcliffe's health. For several years he had been subject to transient fits, which sometimes seized him in the pulpit; but, as they lasted only a few minutes, he usually resumed his discourse without much apparent confusion. Towards the close of this period, he was afflicted with a fever, which continued for a week, and then seemed considerably abated; when, he was unexpectedly

seized with a fit, that held him much longer than usual; and, after that, with a second, in which he expired. Oct. 4th. 1799, at about fifty years of age. He was an useful minister. His abilities, indeed, were not of the superior order; but he delighted in the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, was a pious meek christian, and animated, in a high degree, with compassion for the souls of men.

This affecting stroke left the society destitute and, for a few weeks, they were supplied from the neighbouring churches. Among those who visited them, was Mr. A. Barker, whose manner of preaching and address pleased them so well, that they very soon gave him an invitation to be their regular minister. This invitation he as promptly accepted: and, for some time, every thing seemed to prosper. But we shall have occasion to observe, in the next chapter, that these hasty measures laid the foundation of lasting repentance. In 1800, the number of members in this church amounted to sixty-three.

We have seen, in the last chapter, that, by the exertions of Mr. D. Taylor and his fellow-labourers, the gospel had been introduced, and a meeting-house built, at Shore. The friends there were considered as members of Birchcliff church, till about 1795; when they became distinct society: seven or eight persons being dismissed from the parent church to form it. Previous to this division, John Stansfield, a man fearing God above many, had preached regularly at Shore, till he was removed by death. After his decease, John Spencer settled with this people, and became their regular minister. He continued to serve them till long after the close of this period; but the progress of religion appears to have been slow. In 1800, there were but nine members; and some of these few were "verging towards a lukewarm state."

The low condition of religion at Queenshead, which was noticed at the conclusion of the last period, continued for several years. Disorderly conduct in some professors, want of zeal, a disposition to magnify the failings of their brethren, temporal distress, and various other causes, prevented the progress of the truth, and grieved the hearts of its real friends. Some valuable members were taken away by death, and others removed their dwellings to a distance. Their places were not supplied by new converts: for no more than twenty persons were baptized in the course of eleven years. The frequent attempts, which about this time were made by other churches, to induce the pastor, Mr. J. Taylor, to remove, tended still further to depress the minds of this people, and excited their fears, lest they should ultimately lose him.* Yet, in 1786, in the midst of this despondency, they exerted themselves, and erected a dwelling-house adjoining the meeting, for the accommodation of the minister and his family.

A heavy debt which, for many years, had been a weight on the cause, tended probably to increase this gloom. In the autumn of 1791, twenty pounds of this was demanded. As these poor people were utterly unable to raise this sum amongst themselves, they determined to apply to the liberality of their neighbours. For this purpose, Mr. J. Taylor, attended sometimes by one of his friend-, and sometimes by another, traversed the adjacent towns with a petition, stating their case; which was recommended by all independent and a presbyterian minister, and a clergyman. Though disappointed in their expectations from some of the principal towns, they collected, exclusive of their

expences, about sixty pounds. Several churches in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire hearing of their necessity, kindly lent their assistance, and raised the amount to near ninety pounds. This was a great relief to the interest at Queenshead: and, from that time, it has continued to revive. But this relief was purchased at a heavy expence by the pastor. The fatigues of so many journeys, during the winter season, were thought by many to have laid the foundation of that debility which has so much diminished the usefulness and happiness of his declining years.

In the course of three years, the churches at Ashford, Halifax, Longford and Gosberton all applied, and some of them repeatedly, for the removal of Mr. J. Taylor to them.

Through all these discouraging times, the congregations, considering the situation, had been numerous; and, it was thought that the erection of a gallery would tend to render them more respectable. A part of the money collected in the preceding year, was therefore, in 1792, appropriated to this purpose, and a front gallery erected; which was opened, June 24th, by a discourse from Cant. 7:5.

After the erection of the gallery, the congregation increased; but there appeared to be little good done in the conversion of sinners. The minister's ability for exertion regularly diminished. In 1795, while attending the Association at Nottingham, he suddenly lost the use of one eye; and nothing but the strictest attention, in the opinion of the faculty, could preserve him from total blindness. This prevented him from labouring in the neighbourhood, as he had hitherto done. Several young preachers, indeed, lent their cheerful assistance: but they could not fully supply his place; and their stay with their friends, after they were called to the ministry, was short. Mr. Ellis was dismissed to serve the church at Halifax, in 1793. In 1790, Mr. Joseph Binns was encouraged to preach; and, in the following year, he accepted an invitation from the church, at Gosberton, Lincolnshire. In April, 1797, James Taylor, the younger son of the pastor, was called by the church to labour in the word: and preached, in different parts of the neighbourhood, more than thirty times before the close of that year. His zeal stirred up many to a greater concern for the prosperity of the cause: but he went to the Academy in London, Jan. 16th. following; and was the first student in that institution.

At the close of the period now under review this part of the kingdom was involved in deep distress; and the members of this society bore their full share of it. They addressed the Association in 1800, in this melancholy strain. "The unparalleledly hard, dark, and dismal state of things, from the dearness of provisions and the dullness of the trade, makes it extremely hard for most of us to procure the necessaries of life; and impossible for some to do it. Several of our friends are already, gone to the workhouse more must probably shortly follow, or to death." The number of members then was sixty-five.

We left the church at Halifax sunk in despondency for the loss of their pastor:* they were a sheep without a shepherd, and their hearts fainted within them. They, at length, roused themselves, and endeavoured to repair the breach which his departure had occasioned. Their thoughts were first directed to Mr. John Taylor of Queenshead, and they proposed the subject to the Association, in 1787; but that meeting advised against his removal. Mr.

Bentley, an occasional preacher at Hinckley, was next invited to assist them. He came; but in two or three weeks left them. After several other ineffectual attempts, they wrote to Mr. W. Burgess, who had, for some time, exercised his gifts among the friends at Church-lane, London. He paid them a visit and his labours were so well approved, that they invited him to settle among them. He accordingly removed with his family to Halifax, about the beginning of 1788. This event had a happy effect. The congregation increased in numbers and respectability; and several joined themselves to the society. The friends of the Redeemer were ready to indulge the hope, that his cause in this place, which had so long drooped, would, at length, revive and flourish.

But this flattering prospect soon vanished. It was found impossible, with their utmost exertions, to provide for the temporal necessities of Mr. Burgess and his family: and he was compelled to think of a change. While he was deliberating what step to take, he received an invitation from the old general baptist society at Fleet, in Lincolnshire; and left Halifax in April 1791. Being again destitute, they renewed their application to Mr. J. Taylor; but were still unsuccessful. They then turned their attention to Mr. Joseph Ellis, an occasional preacher in the Church at Queenshead; who, after due probation, became their regular minister. He commenced his services probably towards the close of 1793; and, in the spring of 1796, was ordained to the pastoral office over this church. On that occasion, Mr. J. Taylor gave the charge to the minister, and Mr. J. Sutcliffe addressed the people.

After the ordination of Mr. Ellis, there appeared some symptoms of a revival; but dissensions among themselves checked the progress of the truth. In 1800, they reported, that religion was very low, and that their number was reduced to thirty-one.

Among the other places to which the Yorkshire ministers extended their occasional labours, was Longwood, a rambling village, five miles south of Halifax. In 1785, they made their first attempt there; and, after labouring a year, a few persons joined them. A small society was formed, consisting, in 1789, of nineteen persons. Mr. John Booth, a worthy member of the church at Halifax who had long preached occasionally, took this infant cause under his care. Though already advanced in years, he generally walked to Longwood every Lord's-day morning, preached twice, and returned on foot to Halifax in the evening. This laborious service he continued for fifteen years, without any remuneration: and very seldom did the inclemency of the weather, the want of health, or any other reason induce him to disappoint his few poor friends. Sometimes, indeed, he exchanged with the pastor of a neighbouring church, in order that they might enjoy the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

The interest here had to struggle against many difficulties. They had no place of worship, except the dwelling houses of the friends which they frequently changed. There were some thoughts of building a meeting-house, on the waste ground adjoining the village, in 1790, and permission was obtained of the Lord of the manor; but the Association advised them not to attempt it, in their low circumstances. The immoral conduct also of some of their members, tended to depress still lower this sinking interest. In 1791, they were under the painful necessity of excluding five of their small number; and three others

withdrew. For many years the hearers were very few, and the number in fellowship only eight or nine. Mr. Booth was frequently advised by his brethren in the ministry, and even by the Yorkshire Conference to give up the hopeless attempt; but he seemed determined to persevere. About the close of the last century, the prospect seemed to brighten. The congregation increased, and two persons joined the church. But the gloom soon returned, The extreme pressure of the times broke the spirits of the inhabitants, and fixed all their attention on their temporal distresses. The cause was evidently expiring: yet Mr. Booth, though now grown old, was unwilling to despair, and continued his visits. His attachment to the few sheep in that wilderness was so strong, that he seemed incapable of forsaking them.

At length, providence determined the case. Mr. Booth, in the beginning of 1804, had occasion to go to Leeds on business; and his horse, falling on him, broke his leg. This confined him for several months at home; and, during his absence, the few hearers and members at Longwood dispersed, and the cause sunk. Mr. Booth returned to the church at Halifax; of which he continued a honorable member till his death, in 1813. He is doubtless now receiving a full reward for his long and disinterested efforts to promote the cause of his Redeemer and the salvation of sinners at Longwood.

The church at Burnley, which was formed at the close of the last period, continued, for a few years, to increase under the care of Mr. Folds. In 1787, it was thought proper to erect a meeting-house, which was accordingly constructed in Burnley-lane, about half a mile from the town. It is a compact and well finished building, with a gallery on two sides and cost three hundred pounds; an expence much too great for the state of the church. The debt was long a heavy clog on the interest in that place, and a burden on the Connection. In about two years after the opening of this meeting-house, Mr. Folds left them, in a disorderly manner, and went to Longford. This caused some confusion; but Mr. Edmund Whitaker, a lively, zealous and laborious young member of this, church, who had lately been called to the work of the ministry, with the occasional assistance of Mr. D. Laycock, another valuable brother, supplied the congregation with much acceptance, and contributed not a little to preserve the cause from dissolution.

Could Mr. Whitaker have continued to labour here, it is probable, that religion would have revived, as the congregation improved, and several were added to the church. But his temporal circumstances obliged him, in 1794, to accept an invitation from Melbourn. About this time, Mr. Folds returned, and, after some altercation, resumed the pastoral duties. The cause declined rapidly under his care; and, in 1800, the state of religion was low, hearers few and the members reduced to fifteen.

During the period under review, a circumstance occurred at Burnley which ought to be recorded. A young woman, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, being awakened to a sense of the importance of divine things, wished to attend the meetings of the general baptists where she had received the first serious impressions. This her father, who was attached to the established church, absolutely forbade. The young woman, determined to enjoy the privileges of the gospel, in Dec. 1789, left the paternal roof, and put herself under the protection of Mr. B. Robinson, a respectable member of Burnley church. Her father,

learning the place of her retreat, followed her; insisting on her return, and threatening her protector with a suit, if she did not. Mr. Robinson, thinking that to drive a person out of his house, who had voluntarily fled thither, for the sake of truth and a good conscience, would be unworthy of the character of a christian, resolved to permit her to remain if she chose it, and to take the consequences. The father, therefore, brought an action; and, after a fruitless attempt to settle the matter by arbitration, Mr. Robinson received notice of a trial, at the ensuing summer assizes, at Lancaster. Thither he went, with six other persons, besides his attorney: and, after spending a week there, the matter was determined by a rule of court, without trial. This rule ordered, that the young woman should return to her father's house; but that she should be at full liberty to attend, on the Lord's-day, at what place of worship she pleased: and that her father might, if he thought proper, send a servant to attend her; but that if he did not send one, she might go alone. Thus were the rights of conscience fully secured; but the struggle cost Mr. Robinson nearly eighty pounds. He laid his case before the Association at Wisbeach, in 1791; and they recommended it to the churches to assist in reimbursing him; but the contributions appear to have been slow and inadequate.

Thus we have glanced at the transactions of the general baptists in this part of the kingdom, during this period; and we turn from them with a sigh. Notwithstanding all the exertions and prayers of the friends of religion, the cause, in these parts, evidently lost ground during these fifteen years. When their zealous founder, Mr. D. Taylor left them, there were four churches, which, in 1786, comprised two hundred and thirty-five members; but in 1800, though there were six nominal societies, yet the whole number of members amounted only to one hundred and ninety-two. How far the loss of that active and judicious minister contributed to this unhappy decline may not be easy to ascertain: but that it was one cause cannot be doubted. It is pleasing, however, to anticipate a very different prospect in the next period.

SECT. 3.--The History of the General Baptist Churches in Lincolnshire, during the Second Fifteen years after the Formation of the New Connection: or, from A.D. 1785, to A.D. 1800.

We now turn to the general baptist churches in Lincolnshire; but we are sorry that our accounts of them, during this period, must be very general: as we have not been able to procure the information, necessary to give a proper detail of their proceedings.

The church at Boston claims our first attention, which we left, in 1785, in a comfortable state. This society continued to carry forward the cause of the Redeemer, with considerable harmony and success. Mr. Thompson, their worthy pastor, laboured diligently in his great work; and, in the first year of this period, ten were received into fellowship. But there is reason to fear, that some of the members did not sufficiently value their privileges. About that time also a party spirit was too prevalent among the professors of different denominations in the town, which led to disputes and angry contentions. This grieved the heart of their pious minister, hindered the conversion of sinners, and retarded the prosperity of religion. The internal peace of the church was, however, in a good degree preserved: and frequent additions were made to its members.

Towards the middle of this period, Mr. Thompson's health began to decline, and he was no longer capable of exerting himself to that degree which he had formerly done. For several years, his infirmities increased, and he was less able to labour in the ministry; yet the congregations were numerous, and the cause prosperous. At length, he yielded to the stroke of death, Feb. 7th. 1794, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. At that solemn moment, he exhibited the efficacy of doctrines which he long laboured to propagate. These were his support in the near prospect of eternity, and enabled him to bear a dying testimony to the excellency of the gospel of Christ, as the only foundation of a sinner's hope; and to express a comfortable assurance of his own interest in the promises which it contains. He was a worthy man, a pious christian, and a very respectable and useful minister, who had contributed much to the establishment and support of the New Connection. Mr. Burgess, of Fleet, preached his funeral sermon, from 2 Cor. 13:11: and his ancient acquaintance and fellow-labourer, Mr. D. Taylor, paid a tribute of respect to his memory, by delivering a discourse, from the same text; which he afterwards published, with the *Memoirs of the Life and Character of his deceased Friend*. In that work, the author, who was well qualified from his long intimacy with this minister, thus describes him as a preacher. "It may be acknowledged, that Mr. Thompson's natural abilities were not eminently great. They were indeed superior to those of many other ministers; but did not rise far above mediocrity. His excellency lay chiefly in employing them to the best purposes. Having by grace been made deeply acquainted with his own miserable condition as a sinner, and being impressed with the consideration of the worth of souls and the infinite importance of that salvation which is exhibited to man in the gospel, and having an ardent affection for the welfare of his fellow creatures, he did not trifle about unnecessary inquiries, and subtle disquisitions, respecting subjects not to be known, or of little use when known; but confined himself chiefly to those important doctrines and duties which are clearly revealed, and upon an attention to which our happiness for time and eternity depends." "To this, and not to eminently superior abilities, it always appeared to me, that the success of his ministrations was to be ascribed." [D. Taylor's *Memoirs of Thompson*, p. 79.] A hint, well deserving the serious regard of all who wish to be "wise to win souls."

The death of Mr. Thompson was sincerely lamented by his affectionate people; yet they soon began to look about for a successor. For a time, Mr. Binns, who then laboured at Gosberton, supplied them, on the Lord's-day mornings. When he went to Bourn, they applied to Mr. W. Pickering, of Ashford; but his church refused to consent to his removal. They next laid their case before the Association; and were recommended to Mr. J. Kingsford, of Barton, Kent: but it does not appear that this proposal had any effect. While these negotiations were pending, the churches in the midland counties generously endeavoured to furnish the friends at Boston with ministerial supplies: and, by their exertions, the cause was preserved from declining, and the minds of the hearers kept in a lively frame. Amongst others who visited them, was Mr. W. Taylor, assistant minister at Birmingham. His character and talents being well approved, he was invited to become, their pastor; and was ordained, Mar. 22d. 1797: when Mr. D. Taylor, of London, gave the charge.

After this settlement, the hearers increased and additions to the church were more frequent: yet, before the conclusion of this period, they complained "of a decrease in their

Congregations, of several of the members going away to other denominations, and of trials of various kinds."--The number in fellowship, in 1800, was eighty-six.

The church at Maltby. in 1785, was in a peaceable state; but the health of Mr. Ingham, their pastor, had already begun to decline. Throughout the whole of the succeeding period, he continued to grow more infirm and less able for the active duties of his station. The members, therefore, gradually diminished: for, as death and other causes thinned their ranks, few came forward to supply the vacancies. The hearers at Alsford also decreased, when Mr. Ingham was unable to visit them as frequently as he had formerly done: and, though the congregation was still numerous at Maltby, yet the preaching of the word produced little effect. In 1796, the members had sunk to thirty, and the pastor was hastening to the grave. In two years afterwards, he exchanged a bed of languor and pain for that happy state, in which the inhabitants never say, " We are sick." In a few months after his decease, Mr. Trolley settled at Maltby, and became their regular preacher: and there appeared some symptoms of a revival. In 1800, the number of members was thirty-five: they complained, that the name of Jesus was too little regarded among them; and that they were by no means unanimous in the approbation of the means of grace which they then enjoyed."

Long-Sutton church had begun to decline at the conclusion of the last period. Of this the friends of the cause seem to have been conscious; and a church-meeting was held, Mar. 25th. 1785, "to consider what could be done to promote the interest of Christ among them." It was then agreed to establish three distinct meetings for reading and expounding the scriptures and prayer: which were to be held at Tydd St. Gile's, Tydd St. Mary's, and Long Sutton. Proper persons were appointed to superintend and conduct them; who were to keep a register of the members belonging to each meeting, and of their omissions of attendance, and to report quarterly to the pastor. At the same time, they recommended to their minister to open more clearly, in his preaching, the spirituality of the law; and to join with them in endeavouring to maintain a more regular discipline in the society. These laudable measures appear to have produced a good effect; as, for several years, a few additions were made to their number.

But Mr. Poole, having read some of the writings of Mr. E. Winchester, embraced the peculiar sentiments of that author, and invited him to come and preach at Long-Sutton. This invitation Mr. Winchester promptly accepted; and gained many proselytes. Difference of sentiment arose among the members, which produced disagreeable altercations; and the progress of the cause was prevented. TO put an end, as they hoped, to these mischievous contentions, it was resolved, Jan. 30th. 1791, "mutually to forbear with each other, and allow each other to think for himself in matters of divinity, without attempting to irritate each other's passions on the account of difference of sentiment." Seven brethren and six sisters agreed to unite with Mr. Poole on this broad basis.

This professed laxity of principle led to a still greater declension. From the denial of the eternity of future punishments, they proceeded to disown the divinity and atonement of the Saviour. Having, thus renounced the distinguishing doctrines of the New Connection, they very consistently dropped all intercourse with it; and silently withdrew from the

union. Their last communication was addressed to the Association at Hinckley, in 1793: when they reported, that they had experienced many troubles for some time past; but then hoped to enjoy peace: and that their number was reduced to twelve.

Though the church at Fleet did not form a part of the New Connection, during this period, yet, as it made various applications for admission, and ultimately became a branch of that union, it may be proper here to bring forwards its history to the close of the century.

When Mr. Poole left this society, the necessities of the case induced them to encourage two of its members. Mr. Thomas Rusling and Mr. Thomas Melbourn, with the occasional assistance of neighbouring ministers, to supply the pulpit. The former was a person of limited abilities, and an inconstant disposition: the latter possessed strong intellectual powers and was a good speaker. They both indulged some notions bordering on mysticism; being professed admirers of Jacob Behmen. They did not, however, long co-operate with cordiality. Mr. Rusling, conceiving that his colleague's services were preferred to his, took umbrage, laid aside the ministry, and soon after joined the quakers.- About the same time, Mr. Melbourn, for very different reasons, abruptly relinquished the sacred work, to which he had always shewn great reluctance.

Thus left destitute, the church invited Mr. Joseph Proud, who then resided at Wisbeach, to visit them as a supply; and his labours, being approved, he was encouraged to remove to Fleet. In a few years afterwards, he was ordained to the pastoral office; and the cause prospered under his care: so that it was found necessary' in 1782, to enlarge the place of worship. Mr. Proud was a man of superior qualifications for the exercises of the pulpit: and, had his humility equalled his abilities, he might have been an eminent and useful minister of the gospel. But his haughtiness of temper led him to take several steps which sunk him in the estimation of the friends. He introduced, by his own authority, the practice of congregational singing into the public worship of the church, though he was well aware that many of the members conscientiously disapproved of it. Discontents arose: and, as it usually happens, each party complained of the other. At length, in 1786, an opening presented at Norwich; and he suddenly left Fleet, without acquainting the church of his design.

Thus unexpectedly deprived of their pastor, the leading members endeavoured to supply the loss, by maintaining prayer-meetings, and reading sermons from valuable authors. They did not, however, neglect to look out for ministerial assistance; but soon turned their eyes to Mr. T. Pickering of Castle-Donington, who had spent some time with them as a supply. Approving his character and ministry, they requested him to settle with them; but, after much deliberation, he declined the proposal. They were then recommended to Mr. Prowitt, of Oxford, who paid them a visit; and his labours being satisfactory, they encouraged his expectations of being finally chosen as their regular minister. But, while this negociation was proceeding, Mr. T. Pickering informed the church, that those obstacles, which had induced him to refuse their request, were removed. This involved them in considerable difficulty: as most of the members preferred his labours to those of Mr. Prowitt; but several thought that matters had gone too far with the latter, to permit them honourably to draw back. The decision was, at length, referred to a ballot, which

terminated in favour of Mr. Prowitt. He possessed a friendly temper and great suavity, of manners; but inclined too much to the tenets of the socinians. Though, in his public discourses, he endeavoured to give no offence; yet there was a deficiency with which his judicious hearers could not produce a coolness on their part, which induced him to take a friendly leave of them, and remove to Newcastle; accompanied by the sincere esteem of his connections at Fleet.

At this time, Mr. Thomas Ewen, the son of a deacon of this church, had begun to exercise his gifts; and, on Mr. Prowitt's recess, he and Mr. Thomas Fant, another member, were encouraged to supply the public services with preaching. Though grateful for this assistance, yet the society thought it proper to inquire for a person qualified to sustain the office of pastor over them; and were soon informed, that Mr. Burgess, of Halifax, had thoughts of leaving that station. A correspondence was, therefore, opened with that minister, which led to his settling among them. He arrived, with his family, at Fleet, April 14th. 1791.

The church, at this time, consisted of sixty-two members: but discipline appears to have been too much neglected: and the first attempt of Mr. Burgess was to revive it. A meeting was accordingly held, May 29th, to inquire into the state of the society, and to establish church-meetings; which were afterwards regularly maintained. It was also resolved, to request Mr. Thompson of Boston, and Mr. Freeston, of Wisbeach, to attend once in two months, to administer the ordinance of the Lord's supper. The imposition of hands, which had hitherto been held necessary to communion with this church, was, likewise, Jan. 22d 1792, left to the option of each candidate. Meantime, the labours of Mr. Burgess grew daily more acceptable and useful; and his character more esteemed. In the following May, the friends gave him an unanimous call to the pastoral office, which he accepted: and, Jan. 2d. 1793, he was ordained; when Mr. Thompson gave the charge to the minister, from 1 Tim. 4:6; and Mr. Birley, of St. Ives, addressed the people, from Luke 3:10.

As Mr. Burgess had been uniformly united with the New Connection, it was natural for him to wish that the church, over which he presided, should become a member of that body. At the following Association, therefore, they applied for admission. In stating their religious views, they candidly acknowledged that sortie of them held the doctrine of universal restoration. On this account, the church at Melbourn voted against their admission; and the subject was referred to the Association in 1794. When they renewed their application to that meeting, seven or eight other churches joined the opposition; and the conclusion was again postponed. The church at Fleet, therefore, declined making any further overtures, and resumed their connection with the Lincolnshire Association.

During some following years, the progress of the cause was retarded, by personal disputes, which had been long agitated between several of the principal members; and, in too many instances, by the inconsistent conduct of others. Yet an encouraging progress was made; and the labours of Mr. Burgess, both public and private, were highly approved and blest. The congregations increased in number and respectability; and the society in

members. No fewer than sixty-four persons were added to the church, in the interval from the time when Mr. Burgess settled at Fleet to the close of the year 1800.

At the conclusion of the former period, the ancient general baptist society at Killingholm appeared, by the blessing of God on the exertions and care of Mr. J. Hannath, its laborious pastor, to be reviving from a state of deep declension. And, though there arose a diversity of sentiment, at that time, which operated unfavourably on the minds of several friends; yet it appears to have quickly subsided: for, in 1787, they were unanimous, and had introduced preaching into two neighbouring places, Halton and Immingham. For several years, the congregations were numerous; and additions to the church frequent. The increase of the cause made it necessary to enlarge the place of worship: which accordingly was taken down; and a new and more spacious one erected in its place. This was opened, Nov. 10th. 1792: when Mr. Scott, of Retford, preached, in the morning, from Hag. 2:9; and Mr. Beatson, a particular baptist minister from Hull, in the afternoon, from John 4:23, 24.

It is probable, that these ministers took this opportunity to state and enforce their opposite views on some important points of doctrine: as, from this time, there arose a difference of sentiment amongst the members, which produced the most unhappy effects. One party adhered to their ancient principles, respecting the extent of the Saviour's atonement; and the other espoused the calvinistic views on that question. The debates ran high. A young man, who had lately been called to the ministry warmly advocated the new tenets: and Mr. Hannath, then eighty years old, was less capable of defending the truth, or convincing gainsayers. Yet, notwithstanding these disputes, the cause prospered. In 1796, thirty-eight persons were added to the church by baptism; and the members increased to seventy-seven.

But, in that year, the contentions, which had so long distracted, this society, broke out into an open rupture. About thirty of the members severed the principles of the general baptists, and adhered to their venerable pastor; but the rest forming themselves into a distinct society, invited a particular baptist minister to settle with them. Considerable discussion and uneasiness arose, respecting the property of the church, and the possession of the meeting-house. The one party claimed it as the supporters of the doctrines for the promotion of which it was originally intended: their opponents, however, having several trustees among them, and being the majority, kept possession of part of the land. By a kind of compromise, it was also at length agreed, that the meeting-house should be enjoyed in common; the seceders occupying it, on the morning of the Lord's-days; and the general baptists, in the afternoon.

Though the latter were reduced in numbers, they did not despond. They appear to have had several, amongst themselves, who assisted in preaching, with considerable approbation: especially Mr. Joeph Wieles, who was also a very useful and active deacon, and Mr. Edward Hunter, of Clixby. They were zealous to support and propagate what they esteemed to be the truth: but the age of their pastor, and the number of places at which they maintained regular preaching, made it highly desirable to obtain further assistance. They, therefore, in 1798, invited Mr. W. Smedley, the son of Mr. J. Smedley,

of Gamston, who had been called to the work of the ministry, to come over and help them. The labours of this young man were blest: the hearers increased; many were added to the church and the word of life was carried into new places. At this time, they preached regularly at Killingholm, Ulesby, Halton, Habrough, Limber, Keelby, Asby, Binbrook and Clixby; besides occasionally visiting several other places.

While these exertions were making to spread the kingdom of the Redeemer, their venerable pastor, Mr. J. Hannath, was called to his reward. He died March 19th. 1799, at the advanced age of eighty-seven, and was buried in the ground belonging to the meeting-house. But so strong was the prejudice of the parties against each other, that Mr. E. Hunter, whom the deceased had requested to preach his funeral sermon, was prevented from occupying the meeting-house, and obliged to perform that last office of respect in his own house, at Clixby. The text was Phil. 3:20, 21. Mr. Hannath appears to have been an active and useful minister; and a hearty friend to the general baptist cause. By his persevering exertion it was restored to a good degree of prosperity, in a situation, which, by its distance from other churches of the same denomination, precluded him from that assistance and support, which many of his fellow labourers enjoyed.

Mr. Smedley attended the Lincolnshire Conference, Sept. 27th. 1798; and expressed a strong desire that, for the advantage of the cause at Killingholm, the meetings of the Conferences might, be extended to that village but its distance was thought to render such a measure impracticable. The brethren then assembled advised the churches in the north of Lincolnshire to form a distinct conference among themselves; and promised that some of their ministers should occasionally attend it. The general baptist churches in those parts were not, however, sufficiently strong to carry such a design into effect.

In the commencement of 1800, Mr. Smedley left Killingholm to pursue his studies, at the newly-formed academy, under Mr. D. Taylor. On his departure, the church applied to Mr. W. Aterby, the pastor of the society at Kirton in Lindsay, who removed with his family to Killingholm, March 8th. 1800. At the following Association, it was stated that his labours were well attended, and would, it was hoped, be rendered a blessing. This church then consisted of fifty-two members.

The general baptists at Gosberton were, at first, as has been already noticed, considered as members of the church at Spalding. Previous to the conclusion of the seventeenth century, it is certain that many of the members of that society dwelt, here, and that regular public worship was maintained in this place: and, if we may judge from the share of the property of the church assigned to it, the interest here was esteemed of great importance.* In the former part of the eighteenth century, this branch of the society appears to have flourished, under the care of Mr. Roberts; a minister of respectability and talents, who died about 1724.* From that date, for nearly forty years, we have not been able to obtain any information respecting the progress of religion at Gosberton except that, during that interval, the connection with Spalding was preserved though, from various circumstances, it continued to grow less intimate; and that, owing rather to the decline of the parent society than to its own prosperity, it is probable that it was often in a better state than the interest at Spalding.

[* This was four acres of land which lay in Weston, a village about four miles east of Spalding; purchased, as the Fleet church book informs us, by a Donation from John Rutton. The rent was divided into seven equal parts: of these Spalding had two parts; Bourn and Hackenby, two; Gosberton, two; and Fleet one. The earliest receipt for this rent is in 1704 and the first that specifies the distribution of it in the above proportion, is dated January 1st. 1709.]

We hear of no other pastor of this society, till Mr. Joseph Anderson took the oversight of it; who was ordained, Oct. 31st. 1762. He was then in the prime of life; and appears to have been an active and laborious minister. We find him constant in his attendance at the Lincolnshire Association; and frequently appointed to preach at their meetings. Yet his labours do not seem to have been very successful at Gosberton: for in 1771, the members in fellowship were only twenty-six, though those who dwelt at Spalding were probably included in the account; and, in two years afterwards, they had sunk to eighteen. But a pleasing revival then took place. The pastor rose high the estimation both of his religious connections and of the neighbourhood at and, in 1781, the number of members increased to thirty-six. In the spring of that year, he was affected with a cold; and, before he was perfectly recovered, had occasion to assist the general baptists at Burgh and Monksthorpe, who were then destitute of a pastor. While engaged in conducting the worship of God, he was suddenly seized with indisposition, and conveyed from the pulpit to the house of his friend, Mr. Hursthouse, of Croft. After languishing a week, he died April 1st. 1781. Mr. W. Thompson, of Boston, preached his funeral sermon, from Acts 20:38. A widow and six children were left to deplore their loss.

After the death of Mr. Anderson, Mr. Fant, of Swineshead, supplied the pulpit; and, for a short time, the cause continued to prosper. In 1782, the number of members was forty. But a sad reverse followed. In the following year, they addressed the Association of the New Connection, at Nottingham, stating their "distressed situation, for want of a pastor, ordinances and discipline; and their desire to join the New Connection." That meeting advised them to take the usual methods for gaining admission into the union; and requested Mr. Thompson, of Boston, "to visit and assist them, in the order and discipline of the church, and to administer the Lord's supper among them, when he could make it convenient." At the following, Association, Gosberton church was placed in the list of the New Connection; and immediately applied for assistance in liquidating a debt which heavy on an individual. [This debt amounted to sixty pounds, and appears to have been contracted by building or repairing a meeting-house: but no particulars of any such event have yet reached us.]

In 1787, the state of religion still continued discouraging: they complained of a want of the ordinances, and earnestly desired, that the visits of Mr. Thompson might be more frequent. At this time, there arose a misunderstanding between the societies at Gosberton and Spalding. The brethren at the latter place, had encouraged Mr. Rusling to preach, contrary to the opinion of the friends at Gosberton. Mr. Rusling had formerly been an occasional preacher at Fleet; and, removing to Gosberton, had, for a short time, assisted them. But taking some offence, he left their communion and joined the quakers; with

whom he continued six years. Those cautious people not encouraging him as he expected, to become a public speaker amongst them, he turned round again; and, leaving the quakers, joined the general baptists at Spalding. There being then a great need of ministerial assistance in that congregation, Mr. Rusling soon began to employ himself in preaching. His earnestness and zeal gained him many partizans, whom he inspired with an impetuosity like his own. In their eagerness to push him forwards, they attempted to intrude his services on the friends at Gosberton. Those more judicious christians, however, totally disapproving of the whole of the proceedings, laid the case before the Association, at London, 1787; and were advised to endeavour to bring the people at Spalding to repentance; and, if they failed in that attempt to withdraw from them. As might be expected, from the temper by which Mr. Rusling's friends were then governed, they could not be brought to repentance; and the union between the two congregations, which had subsisted, nominally at least, for upwards of a century, was dissolved. Probably the omission of the names of the members at Spalding, who had formerly been reckoned as belonging to Gosberton, contributed to reduce their number to fourteen; as it stands in the Minutes of this year.

Thus left to themselves, they felt the necessity of obtaining a more regular and efficient supply, than Mr. Fant, from distance of abode and other circumstances, could afford them. They, therefore, turned their attention to Mr. John Taylor, of Queenshead, Yorkshire; and made strenuous exertions to obtain his removal to Gosberton; but the Association disapproving of the measure, they were finally unsuccessful. Being thus disappointed of their first object, they invited Mr. Joseph Binns, who had, lately been called out as a preacher, by the church at Queenshead. In 1790, he arrived at Gosberton, and commenced his labours. The cause appeared to revive: hearers increased, and preaching was maintained at Swineshead-Fenhouses; at which place many attended, and there was an encouraging prospect of usefulness. While Mr. Binns was able to devote his undivided attention to this interest, it continued to improve. But, after the death of Mr. Thompson, he was employed one part of each Lord's-day in supplying Boston; and, about the same time, his health declined so that he was unable to sustain the fatigue of preaching three times in the day. This proved injurious to the cause at Gosberton; and caused a degree of dissatisfaction, which, joined to some temporal difficulties, induced him to listen to an overture from Bourn. He laid his case before his brethren at the Lincolnshire Conference, April 7th. 1795: when, after a long and serious deliberation, that meeting approved of his removal. He therefore left Gosberton before the close of the year; but the friends there still retain a grateful sense of his service while he resided with them.

The church applied to the following Association for advice, and were recommended to Mr. Yates, of Cauldwell; but he declined the proposal. They therefore depended, for a year, on the occasional assistance of neighbouring ministers; and were favoured, beyond their expectation, by the visits of Mr. W. Taylor, of Boston, and Mr. Wright, of Peterborough. They wished, however, for a more regular supply; and invited Mr. Briggs, of Sutton-Ashfield. He settled at Gosberton, in March, 1797: and his labours were acceptable. Soon after his arrival, two valuable members, Messrs. John Bartol and John Wilkinson, who had for six years officiated as deacons, were ordained to that office: and,

in a short time, the former was called to assist in preaching. He was a man of great piety, and very edifying. abilities and, for some time, was very usefully employed by this society. In the succeeding year, Messrs. Joseph Anderson, and J. Clarke began to preach occasionally. Thus plentifully supplied with labourers, they extended their exertions; and maintained regular public worship at four adjacent places. But Mr. Bartol, after much consultation, removed, in 1798, to take the charge of the church at Spalding; which was, a great disadvantage to the cause at Gosberton. This loss was, however, in a great measure, supplied by the labours of the young preachers, and the diligence of Mr. J. Wilkinson, who held a weekly conference for reading the scriptures and religious conversation, which contributed much to the promotion of vital and experimental religion.

In the autumn of 1799, Mr. Briggs, being invited to Loughborough, left Gosberton: and the whole supply of the various stations devolved upon the young ministers; assisted occasionally by their neighbouring brethren. These means were, for a time, sufficiently acceptable to preserve the congregations from decreasing.--This church consisted, in 1800, of thirty-three members.

During the period now under review, a general baptist church arose at Tydd St. Giles', a village in Cambridgeshire, half-way between Fleet and Wisbeach. Mr. John Smith, a deacon of the society in Long-Sutton, was called, in 1778, to exercise his gifts as a minister: but, as several of the friends seemed to doubt of his qualifications, he was not much encouraged. About 1782, he removed his residence to Tydd St. Giles', and commenced preaching in his own house. At first, the hearers were few: but his serious and plain addresses gradually gained the attention of his neighbours, and reached their hearts. Five persons professing faith in Christ, were baptized by him, and admitted members of the church at Long-Sutton.

Many of the members of that church having, in 1788, embraced the tenets of Mr. Winchester, respecting universal restoration, Mr. Smith and his neighbours withdrew from their fellowship, and endeavoured separately to maintain the cause of truth. They accordingly formed themselves into a church, in Mr. Smith's house; when Mr. Freeston, of Wisbeach, attended and administered the Lord's-Supper to them. The divine blessing crowned the weak attempt; and, in a few years, several were added to their number. Mr. Smith's labours being increasingly useful, he was solicited by his friends to accept the office of pastor over the congregation which he had been the instrument of raising. He complied with their request, and was ordained, April 7th. 1795: Mr. Buress, giving the charge, from. Col. 4:17; and Mr. Freeston addressing the people, from 1 Thess. 5:12, 13. At the same time, Messrs Wright and Burrell, were ordained to the office of deacons.

As the bearers increased, it became desirable that they should be accommodated with a more spacious place of worship. Mr. Smith, therefore, almost at his own expence, built a convenient little meeting-house and a dwelling-house; which he invested in trustees, for the use of the general baptists. Thus favoured, the cause gained ground. In 1796, this church was admitted into the New Connection when the number of members was fifteen.

In 1800, thirteen were baptized and they hoped, that "the Lord was with them, and would soon add to them a few more." There were then twenty-eight persons in fellowship.

We have seen, in the former part of this history, that there was a society of general baptists at Wisheach, in Cambridgeshire, during the protectorate of Cromwell; and that, at Walpole-Bell, a hamlet within five miles of the former, a church was raised by Mr. Marham,, which was under the care of Mr. R. Booth. This, at the Revolution, consisted of about thirty members. It is highly probable, that, prior to the close of the seventeenth century, these two congregations united in one society; which afterwards was denominated from the market-town rather than the hamlet. In the year 1697, these professors built a meeting-house, at Wisbeach; which cost upwards of one hundred and twenty pounds. At that time, Mr. Henry Place, a woollen-draper of that town, seems to have been a leading member of this society; as he accommodated the church with the ground on which the meeting-house stands: but whether by gift or sale, does not appear.

In, the imperfect records of this society which have been preserved, we find the following entry, dated Nov. 26th. 1697. "We, whose names are subscribed, living in or near Wisbeach, do hereby, signify, that, as the Lord has been gracious to our souls in calling us by the gospel, to the fellowship of the saints, and placed the bounds of our habitation near together; so we do joyfully agree to incorporate ourselves together in one church-state, and to be one people and holy, to manage and carry on the work of the Lord together." This minute is signed by twenty-six persons. This passage does not, however, prove, that the church was then first formed; as it was not unusual for the old general baptists, on solemn occasions, to renew their church covenant." And it is probable, that this resolution was made when they met, either to unite in building their meetinghouse, or at the opening of it. They were then without a pastor: Mr. Booth, who was "a gifted brother," thirty years before this date, being most probably dead.*

While thus as sheep without a shepherd, they occasionally visited by the messengers of the churches; one part of whose duty it was to assist and direct destitute congregations. One of these, Mr. Morriss, a minister of some eminence, while labouring among them, was seized with an indisposition, of which he died, Sept. 19, 1706, at the house of one of the members; and was interred in the meeting-house. This was, probably, the Mr. F. Morriss mentioned by Crosby. Vol. III. p. 140.]

In a few years after that event, they were favoured with a pastor: Mr. John Sharman being ordained to that important office, June 12th 1710. As we meet with his signature to the minutes of the church-meetings for several previous years, he seems to have been called to the ministry by this church. When he took the oversight of this society, there were about thirty-five members; and the cause prospered under his care: there being a list of above forty persons received into fellowship by baptism; most of whom appear to have been the fruits of his ministry. He died in February, 1723.

On the decease of Mr. Sharman, the friends wrote to the Lincolnshire Association, May 10th. following, requesting ministerial assistance: and Messrs. Isaacs and Locking were appointed, by that assembly, to visit them in the course of two months. At a subsequent

meeting of the same body, Mr. Joseph Hooke was requested "to visit the brethren at Wisbeach as often as e could:" and that active minister took several journeys to serve them. They were also sometimes assisted by Mr. William Stangar, of Northamptonshire.

During the occasional visits of these messengers, the church had called one of their own members, Mr. William Fisher, to the sacred work; and, after he had laboured amongst them, with increasing, acceptance, for several years, they invited him to take the oversight of them. He was ordained, June 5th. 1732; and continued pastor of this congregation for fifteen years. The interest of religion, during his ministry, was nearly in the same state as it had been under his predecessors. He was removed by death, April 1st. 1747.

For almost ten years after the death of Mr. Fisher, this society continued in a widowed state; and experienced the usual effects of such a situation, in the decline of the church and congregation. The deeply affected those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity: and they not only mourned over it in secret, but appointed a season of public humiliation on its account. This we learn from the following interesting record. "At our church-meeting, held Oct. 17th. 1753, after prayer, we have agreed to humble our souls before Almighty God, by a day of fasting and prayer, to be held in this meeting-house, to beg of the Lord to grant us the means of a minister to preach the gospel to us, the poor remains of our ancestors and church which were before us; that we also, by means of the ministry, may be taught in virtue, in wisdom, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and also to be edified one by provoking one another to love and good works."

For some time after this solemn supplication they were deprived of the regular enjoyments of the ordinances of religion, and depended on, the occasional assistance of Mr. John Goode, of Boston, who was then in the messenger's office. At length, the Lord heard their prayers, and granted them a pastor. His name was John Proud; and he came to them from Buckinghamshire. He was ordained in 1756, and presided over this congregation for many years; but the cause was very flourishing under his ministry. As he advanced in life, he was rendered, in a good measure, incapable of the discharge of the important duties of his station, by the almost total decay both of his bodily and mental powers. Mr. H. Poole, the pastor of Long-Sutton church, who had settled in business at Wisbeach, frequently assisted him in his public labours: and, about 1767, Mr. Joseph Proud, his son, who afterwards became celebrated among the followers of Baron Swedenbourgh, was called to exercise his gifts as a preacher. For a short time, he assisted his aged father; but soon removed to Knipton, in Leicestershire. These casual supplies tended, in some degree, to retard the decline of the congregation; but the interest continued to languish, till 1784, when Mr. John Proud ceased from his labours.

During the former part of the last century, this society had been intimately connected with the churches at March, Whittlesea, Peterborough and St. Ives'. This union was cherished, by maintaining, at stated periods, an association among themselves; but none of the records of its meetings have fallen under our notice. These congregations never appear to have been included in the Lincolnshire Association; as we find none of their

ministers attending its meetings, till Mr. Joseph Proud; who, especially after his removal to Knipton, was regularly present, and took a leading part in the business.

On the decease of Mr. Proud, this church invited to their assistance Mr. Joseph Freeston, a member of the general baptist church at Loughborough; who had lately been called to the ministry. He arrived at Wisbeach, in March, 1783, and commenced his labours. As he had been constantly united with the New Connection, it was probable that he would feel a desire for his new associates to become members of it. Indeed their inviting him to settle among them indicated a friendly disposition towards those, with whom he had previously acted. Accordingly, they applied to the Association at Kirton, expressing their earnest desire to be included in the union. They were advised to write to the churches, in the usual way; and, at the next Association, at Boston, in 1785, were regularly admitted as members of the New Connection. Availing themselves immediately of their privilege, they presented a case to the meeting: stating the exceedingly low state of religion, and their desire to enjoy the ordinances more regularly: and requesting advice and assistance. The Association thought it would be most prudent for the friends to request Mr. Poole, who still resided at Wisbeach, to administer the Lord's-supper to them as often as it could be made convenient.

The effects of Mr. Freeston's labours were soon apparent, in the revival of the cause. Before the next year, they had introduced preaching into several neighbouring places, with an encouraging prospect of success: and the members, then were thirty-two. Yet the disorderly conduct of some: gave much trouble to the church; and the necessity of exclusion frequently occurred. Death also deprived them of several of their number; so that, in 1789, they were reduced to twenty-one. The congregations, notwithstanding, continued to be numerous, and their approbation of Mr. Freeston's ministry and character increased. It was, therefore, resolved to give him a call to the pastoral office. This he accepted; and was ordained, Sept. 1st. 1789: when Mr. Birley, of St. Ives', delivered the charge, from 1 Tim. 3:1; and Mr. W. Thompson addressed the church, from Psalm 133:1.

A pleasing change soon appeared. The ordinances of the gospel were now regularly administered, and the value of the privileges of church fellowship began to be more justly appreciated. Before the next Association, fifteen were added to the church by baptism. Such an accession of strength animated them to more vigorous exertions; and the interest of the Redeemer continued to prosper. In 1796, the members had increased to fifty-eight: "the greatest part of whom were commendably active and zealous." They extended their care to promote the kingdom of the Redeemer in distant places; and greatly assisted and encouraged Mr. Thomas Ewen, in his successful exertions to revive the decayed general baptist church at March: and, for several years, their annual reports to the Association exhibit an increasing spirit of zeal for the glory of God, and affection for each other.

But, towards the close of this period, the aspect of affairs became more discouraging. Disputes arose in the church, and several withdrew from its communion. Mr. Freeston observed the distressing change with deep regret; and determined to accept the unanimous invitation of the church at Hinckley, to remove to them. He left Wisbeach in the summer of 1799. After his departure, Mr. Thomas Fant, one of their members,

preached frequently; and they were occasionally assisted by the neighbouring ministers. But these supplies were precarious and unsatisfactory; and by no means adapted to uphold, much less to revive, the drooping cause. It continued to decline; and, in 1800, they gave this melancholy account of themselves. "The state of religion is very low amongst us: several of our hearers having left us; and several of our members; we are sorry to say it, shew great indifference in attending to the means which we at present enjoy. Our members are now reduced to thirty-four."

During this period, the church at St. Ives', Huntingdonshire, became a member of the New Connection. This was an ancient society; and appears to be the remains of the flourishing interest at Fenstanton, Warboys, and the neighbouring places. It may, therefore, be proper here to sketch its history, from the date of our last accounts to the close of the eighteenth century.

At the commencement of that century, we find this society without a pastor. October 8th. 1712, Mr. Thomas Clack was chosen elder; and Simon Martin and Robert Knightly elected to the office of deacons. At this time, the general baptists at Fenstanton, St. Ives', and Warboys acted together as one body: and, from an enumeration of the members, it appears, that the number in fellowship amounted to fifty-seven; which, in the course of six years, increased to eighty-nine. The catalogue has this title: "A List of the Names of all the Members belonging to the congregation at Fenstanton and Warboys, owning the universal love of God in Christ to all mankind, and falsely called anabaptists." This list was made in consequence of a renewal of the church covenant, at a meeting held Novem. 5th 1714, at which Mr. T. White, the messenger, presided; and "the church of Christ of baptized believers of Stanton and Warboys did unanimously agree to hold together as one church, as formerly."

Of Mr. Clack we know nothing, except "he was a good man, and died in the faith." As his name appears neither to the minutes of the meeting just mentioned, nor yet in the list of members, it is probable, that his death took place soon after his election to the eldership.

The general baptists in these parts were earnest, not only for their own prosperity, but also for the spread of what they esteemed to be the cause of truth. April 27th. 1716, a meeting was held at Fenstanton, which was attended by the ministers from several distant societies: as James Richardson, Henry Miller, John Sharman, and Richard Drinkwater: when it was agreed to hold an Association of "the churches of Wisbeach, Fenstanton, Willbrun, Fulborn, and any other congregations, of the same faith, who were of a willing mind." On this occasion, it was also resolved to keep the first Thursday in the ensuing May "as a day. of fasting and prayer, to humble themselves on occasion of their own sins, and the sins of the nation; and to beg of God to send forth more labourers into his Vineyard, both there and in other parts."

Though this society then had no pastor, yet they were supplied with several preachers, whose labours were blest to the increase of the cause. Lewis Audley, William Wood, John Cropper and John King were regularly employed in the sacred work, at the various stations at which preaching was regularly supported: and Simon Martin, their worthy

deacon, was frequently engaged, not only in matters of discipline, but. also in administering the ordinances. Mr. Richardson, the messenger, frequently visited them; and presided at their meetings for discipline. In their zeal for the interest of the Redeemer, they occasionally sent messengers to places where the cause had declined, "to inquire what friends remained, and to stir them up to the discharge of their duty." For this purpose, Messrs. Audley and Martin were sent, in 1717, to Elilington; and, though the distance was nearly ten miles, they frequently repeated the visit. But, while thus careful for the welfare of others, they did not neglect their own edification. After several meetings on the subject, they elected Mr. John Cropper to the office of pastor over them; which he accepted, and was ordained, with solemn fasting and prayer, June 7th. 1720, by Mr. J. Richardson: and it was a day of much comfort and satisfaction to all present." Mr. Cropper had long laboured acceptably amongst this people, as an assistant minister. He was, at this time, near fifty years of age; having been baptized, in his twenty-second year, at Spalding Jan. 19th. 1694, by Luke Copeland, a deacon of that church. [On this event, Mr. Cropper has observed.--"It was, at that time, a hard frost and deep snow; and yet no harm ensued. God will be honoured in his own ways, and protect his servants in the obeying of his commands. Let none be afraid to venture into the water when the season is cold, lest they be laid in their graves before the weather be warm." W.C.B.]

The elevation of Mr. Cropper to the eldership gave great offence to Mr. L. Audley, who probably thought himself entitled to that honour. He was intemperate in his expressions of disapprobation; and involved, both his own friends, and the messenger, who had presided at the ordination, in his censures. This obliged the church to call him before them for his disorderly conduct; and issued in his exclusion from their communion. Three years afterwards, an attempt was made to settle the differences, by referring them to the arbitration of several ministers from distant churches: but the violence of Mr. Andley's temper seems to have frustrated every proposal for reconciliation; and, for a time, widened the breach. It is pleasing, however, to find, annexed to his name, in the list of members, that "he died in the faith:" which renders it highly probable that he was re-admitted to fellowship.

The building which these christians occupied, as a place of worship at St. Ives', was originally a granary; and the property of Jonathan Denne, who has been so often mentioned. In 1724, he assigned it to trustees, for the use of the baptists: and it became the principal meeting-house, of the society, which afterwards assumed the denomination of the church at St. Ives'. An expence of nearly twenty pounds was incurred, by the transfer; which was immediately raised by a private subscription among the members.

The members of this church, attentive to the state of religion in other congregations as well as their own, observed Nov. 5th. 1725, as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, "to bewail the loss of the church, by the death of several ministers, who had been removed from them and other sister churches around them--to implore the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, that he would raise up such amongst them as might be useful to the churches--to lament their own great coldness and decay in christian zeal and piety--and to intreat God on account of such of their christian brethren as were in affliction." On this occasion, they again renewed their church covenant, and took an account of the members. The catalogue

contains only fifty names; but whether the number had decreased, or the list was left unfinished, is uncertain: yet, when we consider the frequent additions during many preceding years, the latter is the more probable supposition.

In 1745, the cause of religion sustained a great loss, in the death of Mr. Simon Martin, who had, for more than thirty years, filled the office of deacon. Highly respected during his life, his removal was much lamented. It appears, that he sometimes assisted in the ministry, and frequently administered the ordinance of baptism. In less than two years after his decease, Mr. W. Janeway, another worthy friend, died; and bequeathed to trustees a perpetual annuity of six pounds, for the minister of this congregation; on condition of his preaching occasionally to Sulton where the land lies on which this endowment is secured.

Mr. Cropper being rendered, by the infirmities of age less capable of fulfilling the duties of his station than formerly, was assisted, by the friendly visits of Mr. Johnson, the messenger, and Mr. Mills, of March: both of whom frequently administered the ordinances in his stead. At length, he was called to his reward, Feb. 14th. 1752, in the eightieth year of his age. He had been an honourable and steady professor of religion for more than half a century; and an useful and respected pastor over this society for thirty-two years,

At the time of Mr. Cropper's death, the members were about fifty; but they appear to have been scattered in many distant places. Mr. H. Biggs was soon afterwards invited to preach regularly amongst them; and, in 1758, he was chosen elder: but, as only twenty-five members voted for him. it is probable that there existed a difference of opinion respecting him. He was, therefore, never ordained; but continued his services till his death, May 23d. 1773. During this period, Mr. Mills, of March, and other neighbouring ministers, occasionally visited this people, and administered the Lord's-supper. The opportunities, however, of enjoying that edifying ordinance occurred but seldom, and were thinly attended: meetings for prayer and discipline were almost totally laid aside; and the cause had so far declined, that, at the death of Mr. Biggs, there were only seventeen persons united in fellowship.

In this dark state, the few remaining friends of religion began to look about for a minister; and soon turned their eyes to Mr. George Birley. This young man was originally a member of the general baptist church at Ashford, Derbyshire; but, in 1765, removed, to assist Mr. Dan Taylor in his school: and joined with the church at Birchcliff. There he was called to the work of the ministry; and laboured occasionally for some time. In 1768, he engaged, in the same station, with the late Mr. John Ryland, who then kept a boarding-school at Northampton; and left Yorkshire. He continued still a member of the church in Birchcliff; and was frequently and acceptably employed in preaching to destitute congregations: especially at Moulton, Spratton, Burton, Latimer and Stony-Stratford. The friends at St. Ives', in a few weeks after the decease of Mr. H. Biggs, requested Mr. Birley to pay them a visit. This he did; and his labours being approved, the invitation was repeated: and, in a short time, it was agreed, that he should spend one Lord's-day in each

month with them. The intervals were occupied by Messrs. Proud, Payne, Mills and Barron.

This mode of supply continued for several years; during the greatest part of which the friends at St. Ives' were earnest and unanimous in inviting Mr. Birley to settle amongst them. At length, he yielded to their intreaties; and, in May, 1777, he took up his residence in that town. He immediately began to preach three times on the Lord's-day, in their meeting-house; and frequently, in the surrounding villages, on the week-day-evenings. Though some success crowned his labours, and a few were added to the church, yet there was too little attention paid to the public and private means of grace and edification. The members were, however, decided in wishing him to assume the pastoral office, and urging him to be ordained. In 1782, he consulted the Association at Melbourn, on the propriety of complying with their request: and was advised to be very faithful in his endeavours to awaken, in his friends, a sense of the necessity of practical godliness, joined to a diligent attention to the duties of church-members, and conscientious exertions for the cause of Christ; and to defer his ordination till he saw that his exhortations produced some good effect. So slowly, however, was this object attained, that, two years afterwards, the Association recommended his removal to Longford. But things soon afterwards assumed a more promising aspect: and the people persisting in their importunity, he accepted their call to the pastoral office. He was ordained, Oct. 18th. 1786: when his much esteemed friend, Mr. D. Taylor, of London, gave the charge, from Rom. 1:9; and Mr. Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, addressed the church, from Prov. 27:10. After having suffered a long privation of thirty four years, these christians now enjoyed the high privilege of a pastor of their own, and the regular participation of the ordinances of the gospel. They increased in numbers and in graces: and, in the following year found it necessary to enlarge the meeting-house, which had become too small for the accommodation of the increasing congregations, especially on the Lord's-day evenings. In 1789, this church presented a request to the Association at Retford, to be admitted as a member of the New Connection: and, in, the following year, was unanimously received. It then consisted of forty members, and maintained regular preaching at Fenstanton and Warboys; at both which places they were well attended, though not so well at St. Ives'. During the subsequent years, their reports contain many complaints of afflictions, lukewarmness, negligence, and disorderly conduct: but, at the same time, give us the pleasing information, that some of their friends were constant in their attendance on the means of grace, lively and happy in their souls, and really concerned for the revival of religion. In 1800, the members were stated at thirty-four; and they were well attended with bearers.

During the whole of the present period, and some part of the preceding, the ancient society of general baptists at Kirton* in Lindsay, Lincolnshire, stood a member of the New Connection. It was probably gathered during the protectorate of Cromwell, or perhaps in the civil wars which preceded it. At the Revolution, the cause here appears to have been in a flourishing state. The members were zealous in promoting the interest of their Saviour, in the midst of the violent opposition; and affectionately attached to each other. At that time, Mr. John Kelsey was their minister; a person of good natural abilities and great devotedness to the service of his Master. Notwithstanding the edicts against

nonconformity, this good man continued publicly to preach the gospel and discharge the other duties of his station. For this fidelity, he was apprehended and imprisoned in Lincoln jail, where we find him in 1660. After some time, that prison being crowded with the victims of persecution, he was removed, with several others, to Nottingham. Hence he wrote to his people, Sept. 4th. 1663: and here he was confined, if the editor of his letters was rightly informed, till at liberty by the indulgence granted to nonconformists, by James II. in 1687. If his account be accurate, this worthy minister languished in confinement seventeen years, deprived of the enjoyment of friends and family; for he had a wife and several children, to whom he bore a tender attachment. After his release, he returned to Kirton, and resumed his labours.**

[* We have postponed our account of this church to the end of this section, which is certainly a little out of place, in hopes of obtaining some particulars of its former history; but our endeavours for this purpose have proved ineffectual Yet, rather than leave a chasm in the work, we have drawn together the few facts which follow; and beg our readers to pardon their paucity and incoherence.]

[** Several Letters, written by Mr. Kelsey, during his imprisonment, were published by Aaron Jeffery, the greatest part of them in rhyme. Though these compositions do not place him in the first rank of poets, yet they contain pleasing evidence that he was a good man, and a sincere christian: humbly resigned to the will of God, and acknowledging him in all the dispensations, of his providence. The following lines will exhibit at once the disposition of the writer and the style of the poetry.

"I hope the more they punish me, that I shall grow more bold: The furnace they provide for me, will make me finer gold. My friends, my God will do me good, when they intend me harm: They may suppose a prison cold; but God can keep it warm. They double my imprisonment, whate'er they mean thereby: My God in it gives me content; and then what loss have I? What if my God should suffer them, on me to have their will; And give me heav'n instead of earth; I am no loser still."

Tradition says, that his removal to Nottingham prison was the means of gathering a general baptist church in that town; which, subsisted for more than a century. He seems to have anticipated such a result, in the following passage, in a Letter dated "From my Prison-house at Nottingham, Sept. 4th. 1663:

"They blame my going up and down, and send me further still, To speak the truth at Nottingham, and thus they got their will. A wise and wonder-working God! to make such use of those, That they should help to spread his truth, who to his truth are foes."]

From this time, we have no information respecting this society, till the year 1781; when it consisted of upwards of forty members, and the public opportunities of worship were well attended with hearers. They were then destitute of a pastor; and appear not to have had even an occasional preacher amongst them. They earnestly solicited the Association to recommend to them a suitable minister; but that meeting could not find one at liberty. For several years, they dragged heavily forwards, and the cause declined; but, in 1787,

Mr. Jonathan Scott, of Gamston, pitying their sinking state, went once a fortnight to supply them. A speedy revival was the effect of his friendship: the hearers increased; and in the following year fourteen were added by baptism. For two years, the prospect continued encouraging; but Mr. Scott then found it inconsistent with his other engagements to continue his visits so frequently. This produced a rapid decline in the cause; the congregations dwindled away, and the members, in 1704, had sunk to twenty-eight.

In 1797, they obtained a more regular supply of ministerial assistance in the labours of Mr. William Atterby, whom, in the following year, they called to the pastoral office over them. For a short time, this union appears to have been blest, and the interest began once again to revive. But, in 1800, divisions respecting some points of doctrine, which were esteemed important, arose amongst them; and led to the removal of Mr. Atterby to Killingholm. The church then consisted of forty-four members.

SECT. 4.--The History of the General Baptist Churches in London, which were united with the New Connection: from A.D. 1785 to 1800.

The general baptists in Church-lane, Whitechapel, prospered greatly after Mr. D. Taylor settled with them. Mr. Brittain seldom preached after this period; but cheerfully resigned the pulpit to his younger colleague; whose labours were peculiarly acceptable to his hearers, and blest by his heavenly Master. The congregations soon became numerous; and the increase consisted chiefly of persons who had been accustomed to attend at the established church. Additions to the society were frequent: no fewer than twenty being admitted into fellowship before April, 1786. Harmony and zeal animated the members; and, at the suggestion of their experienced minister, various regulations were adopted, to promote the purity and order of the church. He was requested to deliver a discourse, once a quarter, on the duties of church members to each other; and, on August 1st. 1788, commenced a lecture to young people, which he continued annually till his death. This society having long maintained only an irregular and interrupted correspondence with the New Connection, determined, April 10th. 1786, to form a closer union with that body; and, since that year, it has never failed to send a representative to the Annual Association.

In 1791, a commodious baptistery was constructed in the meeting-house, at a considerable expence; which was raised by private subscription: and, during the following year, twenty-five persons, professing their faith in Christ, were baptized and added to the church, The cause continued to prosper; and the satisfaction of the people with the labours of Mr. Taylor to increase. In the annual reports to the Association, they bore repeated testimonies of their approbation. In 1792, they say, "We are amply fed with gospel truth," and two years afterwards, "We with pleasure inform you, that the gospel is preached to us in its purity; and we pleasingly perceive, with increasing zeal, stimulating the hearers to external and internal holiness."--About this time the meeting-house was painted and repaired, at an expence of nearly fifty pounds, which were cheerfully contributed by the friends of the cause. It was re-opened, May 18th. 1794; after having been shut up for ore than a month. During this interval, the congregation was kindly accommodated, on the Lord's-day evenings, at Mr. Booth's meeting-house Prescott-street.

In the midst of this increasing success, their aged pastor, M., John Brittain, was called to his reward. Though he was confined to his room only a short time, yet, for several years, he had been unable to move without support and assistance. He died, Sept. 18th. 1794, at the advanced age of eighty-four years. For almost thirty-eight years, he had honourably sustained the office of pastor over this church; and had made great exertions to promote its interest. And, though after Mr. Taylor's settling in London, he had, in a good measure, stepped aside from the public ministry, he retained to the last his regard to the cause, and his affection for the people. His remains were interred, Saturday, Sept. 26th., in the family vault which he had prepared; and, on the following day, his colleague preached his funeral sermon, to a crowded and affected audience, from Psalm 78:25, 26.

This event naturally brought under consideration the subject of imposition of hands on baptized believers, previous to their admission to the Lord's table; as Mr. Taylor did not believe it to be necessary. After various discussions, it was agreed, that this method should still be continued, as a decent and becoming, mode of receiving church members, though not of divine authority: but, that if any candidate should conscientiously decline it, he should not, on that account, be refused admission to communion. With this arrangement, Mr. Taylor expressed his satisfaction: and this continues to be the practice of the church.

But various circumstances occurred soon afterwards, and broke the harmony which had so long distinguished the transactions of this society. Some expressed their dissatisfaction, that the meeting-house, in the erection of which considerable public property had been sunk, had fallen into the hands of an individual: but the open and candid conduct of the proprietor, who voluntarily came forwards, and gave a full explanation of all the particulars, perfectly satisfied the church, both of the legality and equity of his claim. The enemies of peace were, therefore, for that time, disappointed. Other subjects of altercation, however, succeeded; and the contentions were carried to such a height, that, in July, 1796, the pastor sent a letter to the church, proposing to resign his office amongst them. This caused a great sensation; and it was feared, that a division would be the consequence. But, by the exertions of those who sought for peace, the breach was, in some degree, closed, and unanimity restored. At the request of the pastor, Jan. 3d. 1797, was observed as a day of fasting and prayer, to humble themselves for past imperfections, and to implore a blessing on their future proceedings.

The disorderly walk of many who stood as members caused much trouble and confusion; by which the hands of those who really laboured for the prosperity of the cause were greatly weakened. Frequent exclusions became necessary; but this painful measure had only a partial effect in preventing the neglect of the public ordinances of the gospel, which had risen to a distressing height. The finances of the society also became embarrassed; and, although various plans were adopted to improve them, they were a constant source of disquietude; and the income was with difficulty made adequate to the expenditure. Yet, under all these discouragements, the cause maintained a pleasing degree of prosperity: and, in 1800, they state, "that they were moderately attended with hearers, and peaceable amongst themselves." The number in fellowship amounted to two hundred and eleven.

During this period, several members of this society were called to the work of the ministry: amongst whom were, Mr. W. Burgess, late pastor of Fleet church; Mr. J. Smith, now settled at Tydd St. Giles; and Mr. J.B. Shenston, who was for several years pastor of the church in Gravel-lane, now assembling in Great Suffolkstreet, Southwark.

At the close of this period, Mr. D. Taylor, with the generous assistance of the friends of religion, erected a little meeting-house at Mile-End, which was opened June 12th. 1800; when Mr. D. Taylor, and Mr. Newman, of Oldford, were engaged.

At the close of the last period, we left the church which now assembles in Great Suffolkstreet, in a low state, under the care of Mr. Rowcliff. It then had a meeting-house in Duke-street; and there Mr. Rowcliff continued to labour, though with little encouragement, till July 31st. 1796; when, in consequence of embracing calvinistic sentiments, he resigned the pastoral office over this society, and removed to Southampton. For a few years, the pulpit was occupied by various preachers, especially by a Mr. Tapp, who, for a short time, was a member of the society in Churchlane, Whitechapel. The cause regularly declined, and the church was hastening to a dissolution; when their old friends at Church-lane again interposed their good offices. Mr. D. Taylor went occasionally to preach for them, and to assist them with his advice and countenance: and the students under his care were frequently engaged in supplying them. At length, Mr. J. B. Shenston, a member of Mr. Taylor's church, who had been lately called to the ministry, accepted their invitation to become their pastor. He was ordained, April 23d. 1799; when Mr. D. Taylor gave the charge, from Acts 20:24; and Mr. E. Sexton, of Chesham, addressed the people, from Heb. 13:17.

In the low circumstances in which the cause here had been for so many previous years, the trust deeds of the meeting-house had been suffered to fall into private hands; and, though the neglect of renewing them in proper time, this society lost possession of their place of worship in Duke-street, soon after Mr. Shenston settled with them. The building was transformed into a hatter's warehouse; and the burying-ground, which was of a considerable size and well filled with tomb-stones, was quickly cleared of those monuments of nonconformity, and has since been covered with buildings. [The meeting-house thus lost was built by Mr. Dobson, about 1760, on the site of the original one; which was an ancient structure, erected, probably, about 1670; and is said to have been the place where the famous John Bunyan most usually preached when he was in London.--Wilson, Vol. IV. 179.] Thus deprived of their ancient place of assembling, the few members of this society hired a place in Gravel-lane in the same neighbourhood which had belonged to a public-house; and fitted it up for a meeting-house. It was opened, April 11th. 1800, by Mr. D. Taylor, who preached from Amos 7:12, "By whom shall Jacob rise; for he is small:" a passage well suited to the occasion.

They sent a letter to the Association at Spalding, June 24th. 1800: in which they state their number of members was fourteen; four of whom had been admitted during the preceding year.

That persevering advocate of union, Mr. Gilbert Boyce, though repeatedly frustrated in his attempts to reconcile the Lincolnshire Association and the churches composing the New Connection, still persisted in his efforts. In 1786, he brought the subject before the former meeting, when it was referred to the judgment of the churches, without exciting much attention. But, in the following year it was resolved by the Association of the New Connection, held at London, that a friendly address with a copy of their Minutes should be presented to the general Assembly in Worship-street. This act of civility, which was probably repeated for some years, encouraged the good old man to hope, that one great obstacle to the re-union which he so much desired was removed. He therefore proposed a case to the Lincolnshire Association, held at Coningsby, May, 1789, inquiring, "Whether, as our brethren of the Leicestershire Association are now in connection with the general assembly in London,* with which we are also united, we cannot unite with each other?" This question was referred to the churches, and the answers to it were directed to be sent to Mr. Boyce; but the result does not appear. Mr. Boyce however forwarded a proposal for re-union to the Association at Wisbeach, April, 1791; in consequence of which Mr. Thompson was directed to attend the Lincolnshire Association and receive their proposals. As that meeting was held in a few days afterwards, Mr. Thompson was probably unable to comply. But the subject was again introduced by Mr. Boyce, at the Coningsby Association, in the following June, when the representatives of the churches at Asterby, Coningsby, Spalding, and Fleet, voted in favour of the union; but the church at Monksthorpe, required time to consider of it. The same proposal was again alluded to in the next meeting of the same body; but as a conference was to be held, June 26th. 1792, to discuss it, it was thought improper then to enter upon it. We have no account of this conference, which seems to have been the final attempt to effect a reconciliation. Mr. Boyce, who had already reached his eightieth year, was removed by death soon afterwards, and the Lincolnshire Association did not long survive him.

[* Here the wishes of the good old man appear to have led him into an error, as there never existed any correspondence between the General Assembly and the New Connection that could be called an union. The above present of Minutes is all the sanction to any intercourse which the Records of the Association of the New Connection afford. It is probable that, during this period, a few ministers of the latter body did attend, as individuals, some of the meetings of the General Assembly.]

In the same year, this church renewed its correspondence with the New Connection, which had been suspended for nearly thirty years. They sent a letter to the Association at Spalding, June 24th. 1800: in which they state that their number of members was fourteen; four of whom had been admitted during the preceding year.

In the beginning of this period, a measure was adopted, which, if it had succeeded, would have been of essential service to the whole union. In 1786, it was observed at the annual Association, that several small debts which remained on various churches, for building and repairing meeting-houses, not only retarded the prosperity of the cause in those societies; but, also prevented them from affording prompt and effectual assistance in

cases of general importance. In order to remedy this inconvenience, it was proposed to consolidate several of these trifling burthens into one sum, and to make a general effort to remove them, throughout the whole Connection. This plan, being referred to the consideration of the churches, was approved; and, the following year, the Association resolved to attempt its execution. The societies which were admitted to a share in this collection, were those at Barbury, Long-Sutton, Ilkiston, Shore, Queenshead, Halifax, and Birmingham; the amount of the incumbrances on which was about four hundred and fifty pounds. Mr. J. Deacon was requested to print a circular letter, stating and recommending the several cases: and certain ministers were nominated to collect for this object in the different districts: who were earnestly requested to complete the whole business before the following Association. At that Association, the returns were made: but it then appeared, that some churches refused to lend any assistance--that others could not attend to it till some future period--and that some of the ministers appointed to collect had not been able to make any attempt; while the exertions of others had been only partial and limited: so that not one hundred pounds had been procured. This small sum was divided amongst the societies which were included in the proposal, in proportion to their respective debts: and further efforts were strongly recommended. Yet it does not appear that much more was done; and the expected assistance was intercepted by that want of general co-operation which has, on many other occasions, injured the New Connection.

During this period, the Association was very laudably solicitous to procure proper books for the use of the churches. In 1700, a case was sent from the midland Conference, stating the necessity of a new Collection of Hymns for public worship: the former collection, which had been published soon after the formation of the union, being very imperfect, and nearly out of print. The Association therefore appointed a committee to collect proper hymns; and, at their next meeting, directed a Hymn Book for social worship to be published, under the superintendence of a select committee. This was done in the course of the ensuing year.

The instruction of their youth in those principles of religion which they deemed scriptural and important, also occupied the frequent attention of the Association: and Mr. D. Taylor was repeatedly desired to publish new editions of his catechism. In 1792, at the request of this body, he added to the former contents of that useful manual, a section on the "Reasons for dissenting from established churches." In 1789, Mr. D. Taylor preached, before the Association at Retford, on the Inspiration of the Scripture. The discourse was much approved by his hearers; and they unanimously requested its publication. It made its appearance, therefore, Aug. 1790, under the title of "An Essay on the Truth and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures:" and was of singular service in preserving the churches from the snares of infidelity, which were then diligently spread on every side.

We have already observed, that the annual Association was, at the formation of the Connection, a conference of the officers of the several churches, who became members of it by virtue of their stations. During the period now under review, the nature of that assembly underwent a considerable though silent change. Some inconveniences were found to arise, from a seat in the Association being claimed on account of office: and, in 1705, it was declared, at the meeting at Nottingham, that the members of the Association

were persons appointed by the churches. Two years afterwards, the meeting at Kegworth was still more explicit. In answer to the inquiry, "Who are understood to be members of the Association?" it was declared--that, though some of the churches considered all their officers as standing representatives claiming besides a right to add to them annually such others as they thought necessary, and other churches chose all their representatives afresh every year; yet they all sat in the Association as representatives chosen by the churches who sent them: and that no person, whatever his station, could sit and vote as a member of the Association, unless as the actual representative sent by a church to that meeting. The Association was thus formally declared an assembly of delegates; and has ever since maintained that character.

It had also been usual for each Association to determine the place of the next meeting. But, as the limits of the Connection increased, the claimants for this honour became numerous: and the discussion not only occupied much time, but sometimes excited altercations. It was, therefore, thought prudent to adopt some fixed mode by which this matter might be regulated. Accordingly, in 1793, the Connection was divided into five districts; and it was agreed that the Association should visit each in the revolution of eight years. In the first year of the eight, it was appointed to be in London; in the second and Sixth, in Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire; in the third and seventh, in Lincolnshire; in the fourth and eighth, in Leicestershire or Warwickshire; and, in the fifth, in Yorkshire. It was left to the decision of the respective Conferences at what place, in each district the Association should be held. This arrangement commenced in 1794, and has been found very convenient. It is still acted upon: though probably the extension of the Connection and change of circumstances may render it necessary, in a few years, to revise it.

The propriety of endeavouring to assist young men, who were called to the work of the ministry, in obtaining useful learning, seems early to have occupied the minds of the most judicious and zealous supporters of the New Connection.* As the churches increased in number and respectability, the necessity of such assistance would naturally press still more forcibly on every thinking observer. The subject, therefore, became the frequent topic of conversation, amongst individuals, and on public occasions. It was not, however, till the Association at Boston, in 1796, that it received proper attention. That meeting recommended it "to all the churches to adopt some method which might lay a solid foundation and prove an effectual means of giving instruction to such young men as should be thought, by the their respective churches, to possess ministerial abilities: and, in order to facilitate the execution of this important design, it was recommended to the minister, or some other leading member, in each society, to open immediately a subscription for the purpose: Messrs. Joseph Johnson and W. Parkinson, of Quorndon, being appointed treasurers for that year."

[* The first allusion to this subject, that has fallen under our notice, is a manuscript found among the papers of the late Mr. Dan Taylor, intitled "A Plan for assisting the studies and improving the qualifications of young men, who appear to possess abilities for the ministry, and are recommended as possessing such qualifications, by the churches to which they belong: humbly proposed to the consideration of my brethren, the ministers and other representatives, associated at Coventry, May 26th. and 27th. 1779." The writer

considers the manner of raising the necessary funds, and of conducting the, design--the regulations respecting the tutor and students--the course of study, &c. This paper is unhappily imperfect, but it contains the principles and many of the particular measures adopted eighteen years afterwards. The idea, it seems, was not then new; for the writer says,--The design has annually obtained credit and reputation, since it was first begun by a poor blind brother in Wadsworth church and myself." This points to an origin of the Academical Institution not generally known.]

This recommendation had the desired effect and prepared the Connection to enter heartily on the business, at the following Association, at Kegworth. At that meeting, the subject being introduced, half an hour was set apart for one of the brethren to deliver his sentiments on it; and a letter, to the same purport, of considerable length, written by a friend at Loughborough, was read. After a serious discussion, it was unanimously resolved, "that it was highly necessary to do something to instruct young men in biblical knowledge, in order to fit them for the work of the ministry." In pursuance of this decision, it was agreed to establish funds, and open books for subscriptions, without delay; and to choose a committee to manage the concerns of the proposed institution. . Messrs. S. Heard, of Nottingham, J. Bakewell, of Castle-Donington, and W. Parkinson, of Quorndon, were requested to act as joint treasurers. No sooner were these preliminaries settled, than twenty-five friends of the undertaking, who were then present, laid the foundation of the Fund by donations, amounting, in the whole, to nearly one hundred and seventy-five pounds; and eight persons became annual subscribers to the amount of sixteen pounds per annum.

Thus commenced an institution, which has continued to the present day; and, notwithstanding the difficulties and prejudices with which all first attempts have usually to struggle, has been of real advantage to the cause of religion. A well written letter was printed and circulated; explaining the objects of the undertaking, answering objections to it, and exhorting the friends of the cause to exert themselves in its support. This appeal produced considerable effect: and, in January, 1798, an Academy for young ministers was opened, under the superintendence of Mr. Dan Taylor, at Mile End, near London. Six months afterwards, a meeting of the subscribers was held, at Loughborough, June 11th. 1798; at which the attendance of all the supporters of the plan was urged, to consider matters of importance: and they were earnestly solicited to exert themselves to increase its resources; as applications had been received from several young men, who could not be admitted, on account of the low state of the finances.

But the attention of the Connection was at length excited, and this infant institution received encouraging support. A letter, inserted in the Minutes of the Association at Spalding, in 1800, may be considered as containing official information respecting the state of the institution, at the close of this period; and will form a proper conclusion to our present account. After stating the object and origin of the undertaking, it proceeds thus. "This design, we are happy to say, has been patronized since its commencement, beyond our most sanguine expectations; and some of the fruits have already been reaped, which, in so short a period, have exceeded our fairest hopes. The great importance of the object, the, flattering prospects which have been presented and which in measure have been

realized, encourage us to persevere with increasing ardour. Enlarged scenes open on our view; and more extensive good invites us to more vigorous exertion. We implore your assistance, brethren, in this glorious cause; which we doubt not will, repay all your labours on your own heads and on your children and posterity to the latest generations." Such were the pleasing hopes entertained by the friends of the Academy in 1800: we shall have another occasion to examine how far they were realized.

The practice of addressing circular letters to the churches with the Minutes of the annual Association, was continued, with a few exceptions, throughout this period. They proceeded generally from the pen of Mr. D. Taylor; who, at the request of his brethren, drew up interesting epistles on the operation of the holy Spirit--the depravity of human nature--the duties of church members to each other--the evidence of regeneration--and several pieces respecting the Academy. So highly did his friends esteem these services, that, in 1796, when the circular on the Duties of Church Members was read, at Boston, it was unanimously resolved, "That the thanks of this Association be given to brother D. Taylor, for writing the circular Letter; and for all his other essential services to our Connection: and that this resolution be printed in the Minutes." Mr. J. Taylor wrote the circular for 1790, on Family Worship; and Mr. S. Deacon the one for 1797, on Church Order and Discipline;--both very useful compositions.

Towards the close of this period, a monthly publication, entitled the General Baptist Magazine, was undertaken, by a society of well-wishers to the cause, under the sanction of the Association. Mr. Dan Taylor was appointed editor: and, for some time, it promised to be of great service to the Connection. It did not, however, obtain sufficient support; and was, therefore, discontinued, in December, 1800, at the close of the third volume. The profits, had any accrued, were destined to aid the funds of the Academy; but its failure involved the parties concerned in considerable loss.

CHAP. III.

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE NEW CONNECTION, FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY; WITH A VIEW OF ITS PRESENT STATE, AND SOME ACCOUNT OF ITS DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE.

As there would be an evident difficulty, and no small indelicacy, in writing a detailed history of recent transactions, in which many of the Author's living friends, and even the Author himself, have been personally concerned; it has been thought most prudent to insert only a brief notice of the principal events that have occurred since 1800; with a more particular review of the prior history of such churches as have, since that period, joined the Connection: mid to conclude the work with a description of the present state of the New Connection, and some hints respecting the doctrines and discipline of the churches which compose that union.

SECT. 1.--A Sketch of the Proceedings of the Churches in the Midland Counties, since A.D. 1800.

Though the friends at Barton, have been constantly complaining of the want of ministerial assistance, yet the cause of the Redeemer in that neighbourhood appears, during the last seventeen years, to have been gradually extending its limits. Their senior pastor, the elder Mr. S. Deacon, was advanced in life, and soon became incapable, through the infirmities of age, of taking his part in the labours of the ministry. After lingering several years, in a state of helpless debility, he was released by death, March 19th. 1812, in the ninety-eighth year of his age. His son, who had, for many years, been joint pastor with his venerable father, had then reached his sixty-seventh year, and was very feeble. He was assisted, in his public services, by several young ministers, but more regularly by Mr. Jacob Brewlin, whose labours were well approved. Feb. 18th. 1816, Mr. Deacon resigned the pastoral office; and, fourteen days afterwards, was called to his reward. About a week previous, Mr. J. Brewin had been cut off by death, in the midst of his usefulness: and the church was left destitute.

Yet, notwithstanding these trials, the cause prospered. Additions were frequent: and, in 1809, forty-two were baptized on a profession of faith. Preaching was introduced into several, new places, with encouraging success: the meeting house at Barton and Balson were enlarged, and rooms, for the accommodation of Sunday-schools added to each; of them: and, in 1814, a new meeting-house was erected between Lagworth and Thornton, at an expence of nearly three hundred pounds. In 1817, the number of members was three hundred and twelve, who were peaceful and united.

Aug. 26th. 1798, those members of the church at Barton who dwelt at Hugglescote and its vicinity, were formed into a distinct society, consisting of eighty-five members. They called Mr. Thomas Orton, one of their own friends, to serve them in the ministry; and he was ordained to the pastoral office, May 18th. 1799. This interest has continued to improve. In 1817, the number of members had increased to one hundred and fifty-seven: they had then two assistant preachers, Messrs. W. Pollard and J. Dean; and had extended their labours to Stanton-under-Bardon, Whitwick, Swannington, and Ibstock: at all which places they maintain regular preaching: and, in 1814, erected a meeting-house at Ibstock. In 1809, a Sunday-school was opened at Hugglescote; and a convenient building was erected for its accommodation: in which one hundred and twenty scholars are now instructed. The last reports from this society are very encouraging.

At Melbourn, the interest of religion continued to gain ground, especially in that part of the church which assembled at Packington. Preaching was introduced into various dark villages, with a cheering prospect, of good being done. But the weak and precarious state of the health of Mr. E. Whitaker, their pastor, cast a gloom on all their undertakings. After being, laid aside for several months, from his ministerial labours, death released him from a state of pain and inaction, July 10th. 1808, at the early age of forty-two. Previous to his decease, the brethren at Packington had amicably separated from this society. Those who remained at Melbourn suffered great inconvenience, after Mr. E. Whitaker's death, through want of proper ministerial supplies. Their distress induced them incautiously to invite preachers who had lately seceded from other denominations; and this increased their difficulties. After various anxious endeavours and painful disappointments, they applied, in 1815, to Mr. John Preston, the pastor of the general

baptist church in Great Suffolkstreet, Southwark. He accepted their invitation, and removed to Melbourn, at the succeeding Christmas. His services were crowned with pleasing success; and twenty-four were baptized within six months after his arrival. The number of members, June, 1817, was two hundred and twenty-seven; and they had a few candidates for fellowship. They were then at peace among themselves.

We have seen already, that, in 1800, those members of Melbourn church, who resided at Packington, invited Mr. Joseph Goadby, to labour amongst them: and, that they were then nearly independent of the parent society. A nominal union continued, however, for several years; and, during that interval, much was done in spreading the news of salvation into various adjacent places. In 1800, Mr. Goadby licensed a house at Ashby-de-la-zouch, a considerable market town, a few miles north-east. of Packington: and soon afterwards a house was purchased and fitted up for public worship, which has ever since been regularly maintained at Ashby, with encouraging success. In 1802, the gospel was introduced into Austrey, a dark village in Warwickshire nine miles south-west of Ashby; where the word has been made peculiarly useful. In 1807, the connection between this society and Melbourn, was formally dissolved by mutual consent; and this church became a distinct body, consisting of one hundred and five members. They invited Mr. Goadby to accept the office of pastor over them: and, in compliance with their request, he was ordained, Sept. 26th. 1808. The union thus formed was abundantly blessed; and the interest has prospered under his care. A new meeting-house was erected, in 1811, at Measharn, where, for many years, preaching had been maintained in a dwelling house. They have also begun to rebuild their meeting-house at Ashby, in a more respectable style: which, it is hoped, will tend to recommend the interest in that populous town. The number of members in 1817, was one hundred and twenty-seven.

The interest at Cauldwell, languished for many years after the death of Mr. C. Norton; the supplies of preaching being uncertain, and, in some. instances, unedifying. After various disappointments, they invited Mr. J. Pollard, of Swithland; who, fixing his residence at Burton-upon-Trent, became their regular minister. The cause seemed to revive under his care; but secular difficulties soon obliged him to leave them. He was succeeded by Mr. Jarvis; but though his labours were made useful, he also was under the necessity of removing. In 1811, they were destitute of a minister, and complain that religion was on the decline. Not long afterwards, they obtained the assistance of Mr. Gamble, of Leicester, and the drooping interest experienced a considerable revival: twenty-six persons being added to the church by baptism, in 1813. In 1816, the number of members had increased to eighty-two: and though some of their places of preaching were thinly attended; yet "others were crowded with serious hearers; many of whom they hoped would soon come forward to follow the Lamb." But, in 1817, troubles arose; their minister left them; and their members sunk to sixty-six.-Several unsuccessful attempts had been made by the friends at Cauldwell, to introduce their ministers into the neighbouring town of Burtort-upon-Trent; but, in 1814, they licensed a room there for preaching, which, at first, was supplied chiefly by Mr. Moss, who had joined them from the particular baptists. But he soon afterwards dropt all connection with them; and their hopes became less sanguine.

They still, however, persevere in the attempt: and there is some prospect of ultimate success.

Mr. W. Felkin was ordained to the pastoral office over the church at Kegworth, in June 1801, when Mr. D. Taylor gave the charge, and Mr. R. Smith addressed the people. His labours were acceptable, both to his friends and the neighbours. In 1801, a considerable expence was incurred in repairing the meeting-house at Diseworth; and, in the following year, a gallery was erected for the accommodation of the increased congregation at Kegworth. The cause of the Redeemer gradually gained ground, till 1810, when, though many valuable christians had been removed by death, there were upwards of one hundred and twenty members. Yet some unpleasant circumstances then occurred, which induced Mr. Felkin to resign the office of pastor over this church. For several years, he served another congregation, though he still resided at Kegworth. During this separation, supplies were obtained from neighbouring ministers, but the congregations and the church greatly decreased. Towards the close of 1813, the friends of the cause became deeply impressed with the necessity of obtaining a regular pastor; and, directing their attention to Mr. Felkin, made an united effort to regain him. At length, he yielded to their unanimous request, and resumed his former station amongst them. Since this re-union a pleasing degree of harmony has subsisted, and the prospect is become more cheering. Death has indeed made frequent inroads among them; but, in 1817, their number amounted to ninety-seven.--In consequence of the insecurity of the title of the original meetinghouse at Kegworth, joined to other considerations, it was determined to remove the place of worship to another situation: A piece of ground was therefore procured, in an eligible part of the town; and, at an expence of four hundred and fifty pounds, a commodious building erected; which was opened, Dec. 26th. 1815, by Messrs. T. Orton and R. Smith.

The friends at Sutton Bonington, who separated from Kegworth church, were formed into a distinct society, Nov. 5th. 1795: the number of members then being twenty-five. They were supplied with preaching, for some time, by the labours of Mr. W. Smith, and the occasional visits of neighbouring ministers. But, in 1802, Mr. Smith's weak state of health obliged him to decline the work of the ministry; and, for several years, they depended on the friendly assistance of the preachers from Kegworth and Loughborough, and sometimes from Leake. In 1805, Mr. Wilders, a young man who had been called to the sacred work by the church at Kegworth, Mr. Smith, who was enabled in some degree to resume his labours, and Mr. Tarratt, who had lately settled in those parts, united in carrying on the cause of the Redeemer among this people. Their mutual efforts were blest: the congregation increased, and additions to the church were frequent. About this time, they established regular preaching at Normanton, a dark village in the vicinity; where many attended and several heard with profit. In 1808, by some spirited efforts among themselves, assisted by the liberality of a few friends, they succeeded in removing a pecuniary incumbrance which had long been a burden on the society. They then ventured to engage a larger place at Normanton; and, fit it up for public worship; which was opened by Mr. Felkin, June 15th. 1809. It has also been usefully employed as a sunday school. This year also they repaired the meeting-house at Sutton Bonington, and inclosed the burying ground, at all expence of twenty-four pounds, which they cheerfully

raised among themselves. These exertions, considering that most of them are in moderate circumstances, certainly do them honour. Soon afterwards the cause sustained a heavy loss, in the death of Mr. George Doughty and Mr. Theophilus Thorman, who had been pillars in the house of the Lord.--For some succeeding years, the reports of this church complain of coldness, decay and worldly-mindedness; till about 1811, when Mr. Wilders became in a more regular manner their minister; and symptoms of improvement gradually appeared. 1817, the members were sixty-five: and their congregations were encouraging.--Some years previous, regular preaching had been established at Hathern, where the gospel had been occasionally preached from the first introduction of the cause into these parts.

At the close of the last century, the friends at Long-Whatton and Belton, who had formerly been members of the church at Kegworth, formed themselves into a distinct society, consisting of forty-one members; and chose Mr. W. Corah, one of their number who had acted as assistant preacher with Mr. Tarratt, as their minister. Under his superintendence the cause was supported, with considerable harmony and some degree of success, till 1811, when he was removed to the church above, at the age of twenty-four. After his decease, his friends depended, for some time, on occasional supplies; but soon turned their eyes to Mr. John Green, of Loughborough, who accepted their invitation, in 1814. After his arrival, the congregations increased and many were added to the church. A new meetinghouse was erected at Belton, which was soon filled with attentive hearers. They had seventy-seven members, in 1817.

For a few months after Mr. Felkin's departure from Ilkiston, the church there obtained a supply of preachers from the neighbouring congregations; but they soon invited Mr. W. Pickering, who was then labouring at Ashford, to take the charge of them. He complied; and arrived at Ilkiston, Aug. 12th. 1800. Considerable success attended his ministry; and, in three years after his settling with them, sixty-five persons were added to the church by baptism. The cause spread itself into various adjacent villages; and the friends of religion began to indulge sanguine hopes of lasting prosperity.

At Smalley, their hopes have been, in a good degree, realized; but, at Ilkiston, coldness, disorders and disaffection soon checked the progress of the truth. Though transient seasons of harmony intervened during the interval; yet the root of bitterness continued to spread, till 1815; when Mr. Pickering thought himself obliged to resign the office of pastor over them and remove to Stayley-Bridge. After this event, about twenty disaffected members withdrew from the society, and peace was, a good measure, restored. Ministerial aid was procured from the sister churches; and the interest appeared to revive: thirty-two having been baptized, in 1816. In the following year, they enlarged the meeting-house at Smalley: and were crowded with attentive hearers at Newport, a neighbouring village, into which they had introduced the gospel. In 1817, the number of members, was one hundred and seventy-one.

Mr. Thomas Pickering continued to preside over the church at Castle-Donington, with diligence and success, for several years after the close of the last period. In 1801, a new meeting-house was built at Sawley, which cost nearly three hundred pounds. A few years

afterwards, there was a pleasing revival in this neighbourhood; and many came forward and declared their attachment to the Saviour: no fewer than eighty-five being baptized in the three years previous to June, 1806. They then preached regularly, to numerous congregations, at five places; and ascribe much of the success of the gospel, to the zeal and diligence with which prayer-meetings were supported. But the precarious state of their esteemed pastor's health cast a shade over all these animating prospects. In 1807, after a long and dangerous affliction, he was unexpectedly restored to his ministerial labours. The hearers then became so numerous, that they were compelled to enlarge their place of worship. While this was performing, Mr. Pickering had a dangerous relapse, which again confined him to his bed; and he died, Nov. 15th. 1807, aged fifty years. Three days afterwards, his remains were interred; and Mr. Felkin preached his funeral sermon, from 2. Tim. 4:7, 8: to a deeply affected and numerous congregation, in the enlarged meeting-house, which was then occupied for the first time after its enlargement.

This solemn event made a deep impression on the church; but they did not despond. They obtained supplies for the present; and soon after requested Mr. William Brand, of Loughborough, to remove to them. This he did, in June, 1810; and his labours were rendered useful. Preaching was soon afterwards introduced at Shardlow, an adjacent village, with a good prospect of success. Various circumstances have, indeed, since occurred, which have had a tendency to excite trouble and misunderstanding; but, in general, a pleasing degree of harmony and union has been preserved. The number of members, in 1817, was two hundred and forty-five: of whom thirty-eight had been baptized the preceding year. They were then well attended with hearers at all their stations.

In 1800, the church at Loughborough, had spread to an inconvenient extent; and it became necessary to divide into more compact societies. The number of members and fewness of the preachers rendered this a delicate and difficult task; and it caused considerable agitation for several years. The friends who resided at Rothley and its neighbourhood first acknowledged the propriety of the measure; and, in 1802, formed themselves into a distinct body. In 1804, the separation of the branch at Quorndon was finally effected: and the members that remained to Loughborough church, after this arrangement, were one hundred and sixty four; who dwelt in that town, and in the surrounding villages of Coats, Normanton, Dishley, Hathern, Sheeps-head, Garrenton, Thorp Acre and Little Thorp.

While this business was in agitation. Mr. N. Hurst, being invited to assist the friends at Loughborough, preached for them, with much acceptance, for about a year; and then returned to Nottingham. After his departure, they were well furnished with supplies from their sister churches, and the cause prospered. In 1806, they invited Mr. W. Brand, who had spent some time at the Academy, to labour for them during a year; at the expiration of which, they requested him to become their regular minister. His exertions appear to have been blest; as twenty-nine were baptized in 1807. But several causes of uneasiness soon occurred; and, in the beginning of 1810, he left Loughborough. Not long afterwards, this church invited Mr. Thomas Stevenson, of Leicester, to assist them; and he removed thither. For some time, his labours were successful, and the church harmonious, but, in

1813, troubles arose, and a lamentable spirit of disunion prevailed; which, after distressing the society for many months, issued in a separation of several of the members from fellowship.

During this intestine confusion, the congregations continued numerous; and, the of the church being restored, the interest experienced a considerable revival. The hearers increased, till it was found necessary to rebuild the meeting-house, on a much larger scale. This was effected, at an expence of nearly one thousand pounds: six hundred of which was liberally raised in the neighbourhood, principally among their own friends. The place was re-opened, Sept. 25th. 1815: when Mr. R. Smith and Mr. R. Alliot, both of Nottingham, were engaged. The cause continuing to prosper under Mr. Stevenson's care, he was invited to accept the office of pastor; and was ordained, Oct. 8th. 1816: when Mr. R. Smith gave the charge to the minister, from 1 Tim. 3:15; Mr. W. Pickering addressed the church, from Luke 3:14; and Mr. Orton delivered a discourse to the officers of the society, from Phil. 2:20. The prospects are still encouraging. In 1817, the members amounted to two hundred and fifty-two: they were then peaceable and united, had nineteen candidates for fellowship, and were well attended both at their preaching and prayer-meetings.

The friends at Rolhley and its neighbourhood separated from the church at Loughborough, and became a distinct society of seventy-three members, at Christmas, 1801. They chose Messrs. J. Ward and J. Pollard for ruling elders; and Messrs. W. Parkinson and J. Sleas for deacons. At first, they shared with their former associates in the services of Messrs. B. Pollard and C. Briggs, in rotation, at Loughborough, Quorndon, and Rothley. But soon finding this mode of supply inconvenient, they called Mr. J. Pollard to the work of the ministry. He preached regularly for them, for about a year, and then removed his dwelling to a distance. They afterwards invited Mr. J. Goddard, of Ilkinston, to assist them; and he removed to Rothley, June 21st. 1803. Under his care the cause prospered, for several years and great harmony and affection prevailed among the members. In 1898, they called Mr. Thomas Wesley, a promising young member, to preach the gospel; whose services were very acceptable.

Their hands thus strengthened, they preached more regularly at their established stations, and more frequently in the neighbouring villages, with increasing prospects of usefulness. But some unhappy disputes arising, checked the growing cause; and issued in the separation of the members who dwelt at Woodhouse Eaves and its vicinity from this church. Forty-seven members remained with Mr. Goddard, at Rothley; and, though the health of this minister declined daily, yet the cause advanced, and their numbers increased. Death, however, removed him from his friends, July 6th. 1812. This stroke was improved, at the funeral, by Mr. B. Pollard, from 2 Cor. 5:1; and, on the following Lord's-day, by Mr. Felkin, from 2 Cor. 4:7.

For a few years after Mr. Goddard's death, this congregation was supplied by its sister churches, and found a difficulty in obtaining a suitable minister. At length, they invited Mr. Austin, who settled with them, in the spring of 1815. They have since introduced the gospel into Sileby, a populous village two miles east of Rothley; where they licensed a

house, and commenced preaching, June, 1816. The number of members, in 1817, was seventy-two; and the society then enjoyed peace and union.

The friends at Woodhouse Eaves were formed into an independent church, Decem. 13th. 1809: the members then amounted to thirty-four. Mr. Thomas Wesley was invited to labour amongst them; and, for some years, his services gave general satisfaction. The cause gradually improved: and, in 1815, the revival became more pleasing. But, in the following year, Mr. Viesley was for several months, laid aside from his labours; and, after his recovery, dissatisfaction manifested itself, and caused a separation between him and the church. Occasional supplies have since been obtained. In 1817, there were fifty-six members.

We have already seen that the friends at Quorndon did, in effect, separate from the church at Loughborough, in 1801; but, owing to various perplexing circumstances, the division was not formally completed till 1803; when they became a distinct church. The original number of members was one hundred and seventy-four: and they retained Mr. B. Pollard as their pastor. At that time, they preached regularly at Quorndon, Mountsorrel and Wanton; and had encouraging congregations. In 1805, and the following year, there appeared a considerable revival. Numbers joined the church; many of whom had been educated in their sunday-school, and ascribed their conversion to the admonitions which they had there received. In 1806, the members had increased to one hundred and ninety-two: but, from that time, there has been a painful decline. Disorderly conduct in too many professors, not only diminished their number; but weakened the bands of those who were sincerely seeking the welfare of Zion. About the same time, death deprived them of some valuable characters; and the pressure of the times caused several useful and active members to remove to a distance.

All these circumstances contributed to increase their despondency; yet they enjoyed a comfortable degree of peace and union among themselves; and the congregations continued to be encouraging.

Mr. Pollard's health now began to be uncertain, and his strength to fall. He was no longer able to exert himself, for the promotion of religion, with that activity and spirit for which he had formerly been remarkable. The church, therefore, engaged Mr. Pywell, one of their members whom they had lately called to the ministry, to assist their pastor in the sacred work of preaching. For a short time, they laboured together with great zeal and cordiality: but, in 1816, Mr. Pollard was wholly laid aside, by a long and severe indisposition, from which he recovered but very slowly. Finding his health not likely to be re-established, in 1817, he resigned the pastoral office.

During his indisposition, Mr. Balm, who had been employed as an occasional preacher, by the church at Nottingham, was invited to assist this society, and removed to Quorndon. In 1817, their members were one hundred and forty-nine; who made this affecting report to the Association. "As a church, we are in a forlorn situation. Our late esteemed pastor has declined every part of the pastoral work, through affliction; our assistant, minister, brother Pywell, is incapable of preaching, through bodily weakness;

and the services of our other assistant, brother Balm, on account of worldly concerns, are unequal to the necessities of such a church. We want a suitable minister."

The spread of the cause at Leake and Wimeswould, at the close of the last period, suggested the propriety of dividing, that large church into two distinct societies. This was effected in 1801: Leake and Wimeswould forming one body; and Broughton and its dependencies the other. The former then consisted of one hundred and eighty-three members and retained Mr. Bissill, who resided at Wimeswould, for their minister. He, however, left these parts, in the spring of 1802; and returned into Lincolnshire. On his removal, this people invited Mr. Thomas Hoe, an assistant preacher at Broughton, to labour among them. In compliance with their wishes, he removed his residence to Wimeswould, May 10th. 1803. And though for several years, the disorderly conduct of individuals brought great reproach on the cause, yet his labours were made very useful in turning sinners from the error of their ways. In 1811, a pleasing revival took place: and, in the following year, forty persons were baptized, on a profession of faith. But the prosperity of the rising interest was soon checked, by the introduction of doctrinal sentiments, which were deemed by many, inconsistent with the principles of the society. After much discussion and uneasiness, a few of the leading advocates of these novel opinions were excluded, and several others withdrew. The peace of the church was thus, in some degree, restored; but the injury done to the cause of truth has not yet been repaired. The members which, in 1813, amounted to two hundred and thirty-six, in 1817 had decreased to one hundred and ninety-two. Their last report, however, is encouraging; and affords reason to hope that the cause is recovering.

In 1802, the friends at Broughton and its vicinity dissolved their connection with the church at Leake, and became a distinct body. Mr. R. Thurman, who had for a long time been pastor of the united society, continued to hold the same situation in this branch of it. At the formation it consisted of eighty-three members, scattered over the villages of Broughton, Stanton, Widmerpool, Dalby, Grimston, Saxelby and Hose; at all which places they preached, either statedly or occasionally. Soon after this division, finding it difficult to hire a convenient place of worship at Widmerpool, they determined to erect a meetinghouse in that village. This was opened, July 29th. 1804, by Mr. B. Pollard. The prospect there was, at that time, highly encouraging: but the scandalous conduct of individuals soon cast a cloud over it. Quarrels amongst professors, respecting secular concerns, and the declining strength of the aged pastor, contributed to deepen the gloom. Towards the close of 1811, Mr. Thurman resigned the pastoral office, and ceased from preaching. After some time, Mr. W. Hatton settled with this church, as their minister. At first, his labours were crowned with a degree of success, and several joined the church: but disunion and altercations still continuing, the interest again declined. Neighbouring ministers were, however, invited to visit them; and their labours were blest to the increase both of the church and congregations. In 1817, the number of members was seventy-three; and they hoped that religion was on the advance.

At the close of the last century, the church at Friar-lane, Leicester, consisted of seventy-one members, and the state of religion was low. For several subsequent years, the cause appeared to improve. In 1808, sixteen were added by baptism, and four received from

sister churches: among whom was Mr. B. Wood, from Hinckley, who was requested to assist them as a minister. In 1810, their number amounted to one hundred and thirty. But some unpleasant circumstances occurring soon afterwards, considerable altercations ensued; and the assistant minister, with many others, left this society: so that the members were reduced to eighty-six. When this tumult had subsided, an extraordinary change took place. The congregations increased; and additions were frequent. In 1812, preaching was introduced at Billesdon, a considerable village, nine miles east of Leicester. Here their endeavours were very successful, amidst much opposition: a commodious meeting-house was shortly erected; and, in 1817, above forty of the inhabitants and neighbours had joined the church at Leicester; among whom Mr. Creaton then laboured with acceptance. In 1815, preaching was commenced, by this church, at Thurndon, a village four miles from Leicester, with encouraging prospects. In 1817, the number of members was one hundred and eighty-five: and they anticipated increasing prosperity.

The persons who, left the church in Friar-lane, in 1794, uniting together, endeavoured to carry on the cause of Christ, at Archdeacon-lane, in the same town. The Association so far approved of this attempt, as to declare them worthy of the countenance of the neighbouring churches; and advised them to look about for a minister. In the following year, some ineffectual attempts were made, by the same assembly, to effect a reconciliation. They continued, however, a distinct body; and, in 1798, made application for admission into the New Connection. Being advised to take the usual steps, they found a degree of difficulty in complying; and, for several years, suspended all further attempts. In 1805, they seem to have taken their place silently on the Minutes, without any previous discussion. This society then consisted of thirty-four members; but wished for more life and zeal. In 1806, Mr. Thomas Stevenson was invited to labour among them and his ministrations were blest to the reviving of the cause. They had, previous to this date, built a meeting-house; and, in 1807, added galleries to it. The hearers increased; and, in that year, thirty were added to the church by baptism. For some time, the cause continued to prosper, and preaching was maintained at Smeeton and Fleckney, two adjacent villages, with encouraging prospects of success. In 1811, Mr. Stevenson accepted an invitation from the friends at Loughborough, and left Leicester; when Mr. Felkin, who had lately resigned his charge at Kegworth, accepted the call of this society, and became their minister; though he still continued to reside at Kegworth. The same year, they had also an accession of members who had withdrawn from Friar-lane.

Though they complain of the lowness of the cause, fifteen were added to their fellowship, in the following year; and their number then amounted to one hundred and twenty-four. Yet disorderly conduct in professors, and want of zeal still checked the progress of the cause, and grieved the hearts of its real friends: and, in the close of 1813, Mr. Felkin discontinued his labours for them. After his departure, Mr. Goodrich was requested to preach for this church; and there appeared some symptoms of a revival; but his services ceased in 1816. This appears to have been a season of peculiar trial and discouragement; and the painful measure of exclusion became frequently necessary. Yet methods were adopted, by which, it was hoped, peace and mutual affection might be restored. In 1817, the number of members was eighty-nine; and the congregations, both at Leicester and in the villages, were considerably improved. For a long season, this society has received

much ministerial and other assistance from Mr. Wood, who, in all these changing circumstances, has laboured to promote its welfare.

In consequence of the spread of the cause at Hinckley, it was thought expedient to seek for more ministerial assistance; and, in 1803, Mr. Thomas Yates, of Birmingham, accepted their invitation and settled amongst them. In the same year, they enlarged the meeting-house at Wolvey, which had become too small for the congregation. In 1805, a considerable revival commenced, and continued for several years. The number of hearers increased, so as to render the enlargement of the meeting-house indispensibly necessary. A temporary gallery was, at first, erected; but, the increase continuing, it was thought most prudent to erect a new meeting-house, in a more central part of the town. This was accordingly done, at an expence of upwards of seventeen hundred pounds; towards which the members and neighbours liberally subscribed more than six hundred. It was opened, Feb. 18th. 1807, by Messrs. R. Hall, of Leicester, D. Taylor of London, and B. Pollard, of Quorndon.

The cause of the Redeemer continued to prosper, and the preaching of the word was rendered effectual to the salvation of sinners: upwards of, one hundred and thirty having been baptized, in the four years previous to 1809. Though a few of these converts drew back to the world yet, many of them proved the sincerity of their conversion by a consistent conduct. This society had then increased to three hundred. In 1808, the ancient general baptist church at Earl-Shilton, which had probably existed from the time of the Commonwealth, and was then reduced to sixteen members, desired to be united with the society at Hinckley. After mature deliberation the proposal was accepted: and, thus church gained, not only an accession of members, but also a neat little meeting-house and a burying-ground. During this season of prosperity, three young members were called to the work of the ministry: Mr. B. Wood, now of Leicester; Mr. J. Preston, of Melbourn; and Mr. B. Compton, who at present labours in Cambridgeshire.

About 1810, the preachers from Hinckley paid occasional visits to Pailton, in Warwickshire, a village near Monks-Kerby. The prospect being encouraging, a piece of ground was purchased at Monks-Kerby; and a small place of worship erected; which was opened, in the autumn of 1813, and was subsequently well attended. A few persons joined Hinckley church from this neighbourhood; and it was thought, that there was a good prospect of raising an interest, had not some rather delicate and perplexing circumstances damped the ardour and thwarted the exertions of the friends of the cause.

The church at Hinckley had now spread itself to such an extent, that it was thought best, for the general convenience, to divide it into smaller societies. This occasioned much discussion, and not a little anxiety. After various deliberation, the friends at Thurlaston and Earl Shilton voluntarily withdrew, in 1814. In the year following, a separation was effected, though not without great difficulty, between this society and the friends at Wolvey.--After these colonies had been planted, there remained about one hundred members at Hinckley. They applied themselves to rectify the breaches which these separations had naturally made; and chose two ruling elders and two deacons. They enjoyed a pleasing degree of peace and unanimity; and prayed for a speedy revival of the

cause of religion among them; of which they hoped that they perceived some encouraging symptoms. In 1817, the number of members was one hundred and six.

The friends at Thurlaston, Earl-Shillon and the adjacent places, who withdrew peaceably from the church at Hinckley, in 1814, formed themselves into a distinct society, consisting of seventy-five members. Mr. Yates, who had for some time been an assistant preacher at Hinckley, removed to Thurlaston. and became their minister. The cause prospered in their hands, especially at Thurlaston; where the increasing congregation made them propose the enlarging of the meeting-house. In 1817, the members were one hundred and eleven; of whom fourteen had been baptized in the preceeding year.

When the church at Wolvey was formed, in 1815 by a friendly separation from Hinckley, it consisted of eighty members, and maintained preaching at Wolvey, Witheybrook and Burton, Mr. W. Jarvis, who had resided amongst them, for a few years, became their minister. They were well attended with, hearers and their prospects encouraging. But subsequent reports were less favourable: a spirit of disunion having risen amongst them, and produced its usual effects. In 1817, the number of members amounted to ninety-nine, and they had introduced preaching into Attelborough, a village four miles west of Wolvey.

At the commencement of the present century, the church at Longford, suffered much from the pressure of the times, which appears to have greatly retarded the progress of the cause. This drooping state continued till 1806; when a partial revival took place. Mr. Cramp's services being blest, he was ordained to the pastoral office: and, about the same time, preaching was introduced into a neighbouring village called Sow, with some prospect of success. The following year, a new meeting-house was erected at Longford; and, for a time, was well attended. The congregations indeed were respect able; but additions to the church few: and the members complained of deadness and neglect of the means of grace. In 1816, this society consisted of one hundred and eighty members, who still made the same complaint.

The worthy Mr. Green continued to labour among the friends at Birmingham, with great affection and diligence and was blest with encouraging success. The removal of Mr. Yates, to Hinckley, in 1803, threw the whole service of the society on Mr. Green: who, though sincerely desirous of being spent in the sacred work, yet was unavoidably much occupied in secular affairs. The cause, however, continued gradually to advance, both with respect to hearers and members and, in 1807, the increase of the congregation induced them to repair their meetinghouse, and enlarge it with galleries; at an expence of one hundred and sixty pounds. The prospect was daily improving when it pleased the great Head of the church, to call his servant to his rest\: Mr. Green dying Nov. 2nd. 1808. As a strong attachment existed between the minister and people, this stroke made a deep impression on the church.

After being furnished with occasional supplies for some months, they invited Mr. G. Cheatle, who had been called to the ministry by the church at Castle-Donington, to preach for them. He removed to Birmingham, at Christmas, 1809: and, his ministrations

being well approved and successful, he was ordained to the pastoral office, June 22nd. 1813. About the same period, preaching was introduced into King's Heath, a populous and increasing village, three miles southeast of Birmingham, in which there had previously been no place of worship of any denomination. The attempt met with encouragement: the attention of the inhabitants was arrested; several hearing, believed and were baptized: a Sunday school was commenced, and soon filled with ignorant children: and, at length, a commodious meeting-house was built, capable of seating upwards of three hundred people, which was opened, under very promising auspices Oct. 22nd. 1816.

Though trials and disorders have frequently interrupted the progress of religion in this church, yet it has regularly improved. And, in 1817, the members which, at the close of the last period, were only forty, had increased to two hundred and one.

The friends at Sutton-Coldfield, after their separation from the church at Birmingham, stood, for a considerable time, unconnected with the Association. During this interval, they were occasionally supplied by Mr. Green, and other ministers, till Mr. Smart settled with them, who, for several years, became their regular minister. In 1809, they applied for re-admission into the New Connection, and were received: their number then was thirty-two; their meetings were well attended; and their state peaceable. Little alteration took place in their circumstances, till 1815, when Mr. Stuart, removing into Wales, left them destitute. The ministers at Birmingham kindly stepped forwards to their assistance; and their friendly aid appears to have produced good effects; as fifteen joined the church in the following year. In 1817, the number of members was forty-seven; and they had licensed a commodious room for public worship at Sutton, which promised to be very useful.

The cause of religion among the general baptists at Nottingham, continued to flourish, for many years after the close of the last century. Mr. R. Smith's labours were abundant, useful and highly acceptable. At that time, they maintained preaching at five different places. The prospect was so encouraging at Basford, that it was thought necessary to erect a new meeting-house in that village, which was opened Sept. 25th. 1802. In 1809, the same pleasing considerations induced them to build a commodious place of worship at Bulwell and Arnold, villages, each about four miles from Nottingham. In subsequent years, death called away several valuable and judicious friends, and their loss was severely felt in this rising society, which had then increased to four hundred members. Some very distressing circumstances occurred, a few years, afterwards, which exposed them to much reproach, and tended greatly to discourage their efforts. The interest, however, appeared to be recovering from the shock it had received; and, in 1816, regular preaching was maintained, every Lord's-day, at Nottingham, Basford, New Radford and Bulwell; and Mansfield was supplied once a fortnight. The congregations were encouraging, and additions frequent: and the number of members then amounted to four hundred and fifty. But, in the following spring, new subjects of contention arose; and this once flourishing, harmonious, and respectable society, the glory of the New Connection, was unhappily involved in the most deplorable and disgraceful confusion.

In the beginning of the present century, some members of the general baptist churches in Nottinghamshire, settled at Mansfield, a large manufacturing market-town, fourteen miles north of Nottingham; and commenced preaching there with an encouraging prospect of doing good. They were soon informed that a substantial meeting-house, situated in an eligible part of the town, was on sale, at the moderate price of three hundred pounds. The midland conference laid the case before the Association, in 1815; and it was resolved to make the purchase. The transacting of the business was referred to the friends at Nottingham: and the churches were requested to make collections, in order to raise the money.

The purchase was accordingly completed; and the place was opened, July 28th. 1815, by Mr. R. Smith; when the congregations were large and encouraging. The ministers from Nottingham, Kirkby-Woodhouse and Retford, with occasional supplies from other churches, supported regular worship, and some ground was gained. Oct. 8th. following, Mr. Smith baptized five persons, who had been brought to profess faith in Christ, by the preaching of the gospel in this place, The ordinance was administered at Mansfield-Woodhouse, a village upwards of a mile from the town, and a discourse delivered at the waterside, to nearly two thousand auditors.* In the evening, Mr. Smith preached in the meeting-house; and afterwards about twenty persons, including the five newly baptized, and several friends from Nottingham, sat down at the Lord's table.--For some time, the neighbouring ministers continued to visit Mansfield in rotation, and assist this infant cause but, in the beginning of 1817, Mr. W. Smedley settled there, and preached more statedly.--The friends still were considered as members of the church at Nottingham; though it was probable that a distinct interest would ultimately be formed.

[* Amongst them was a person who gloried in being an enemy to dissenters. In order to turn this solemn service into ridicule, and confusion, he had given an old sailor a shilling to jump, from the bridge, upon the back of the first candidate that went into the water; and had drowned a number of young dogs, which he distributed among the spectators, with directions to throw them into the water, during the administration of the ordinance. Having made these preparations, feeling a curiosity to hear what could be said in defence of a practice which appeared to him as madness, he placed himself directly in front of the preacher. He listened attentively and appeared affected. As soon as the sermon was concluded, he stepped to the sailor and forbade him to interfere with the solemnity, telling him to keep the money. He then went to his agents in the crowd, and positively prohibited them from using the dead dogs which he had provided threatening, that he would throw the first person into the water that dared to make any disturbance. The spectators, struck with the change, behaved with the strictest propriety; and there is reason to hope that many felt the power of divine truth.]

Mr. Hardstaff held the office of pastor in the church at Kirkby-Woodhouse, during the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century; but the cause drooped under his care. Disaffection. and disunion perplexed their councils and weakened their efforts; and the natural effects followed. The bearers diminished and the members grew cold and careless. In 1814, these unhappy causes operated more violently and the number of members was reduced to thirty-nine. Subsequent years, however, exhibit a little

improvement: and, in 1817, the members had risen to forty-seven; who appear to have enjoyed a comfortable degree of peace and union.

The church at Gamston and Retford were destitute of all ordained pastor, during the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century. Mr. J. Smedley continued to labour for them, and was assisted in the work of the ministry by Messrs. S. Skidmore and Shipstone. The cause of religion prospered in their hands; and they maintained regular preaching at five different places: twenty being baptized in the two last years.

By 1815, the necessity of a larger place of worship at Retford became apparent; and zealous exertions were made to obtain one. One liberal friend offered the loan of a handsome sum for two years without interest; which encouraged his brethren to proceed in the good work with great vigour. At length, a large commodious meeting-house was completed; and opened, May 25th. 1817, by Mr. Stevenson of Loughborough. A liberal collection was made on the occasion; and the female friends entered into a subscription for lighting the place. The old meeting-house was appropriated to the accommodation of a flourishing sunday school; and, in June of the same year, they made the following report of their state. "We have reason to be thankful both for temporal and especially for spiritual blessings. We are well attended with hearers, particularly at Retford, and enjoy tolerable peace among ourselves."

The general baptists at Derby, when Mr. James Taylor first settled with them, suffered great inconvenience through the want of a proper place, of worship. Encouraged by the sanction of the association, they ventured, in 1800, to purchase a piece of ground; and a committee was appointed, by the following association, to superintend the erection of a meeting-house. This was opened, July 20th. 1802. On this occasion, Messrs. Felkin of Kegworth, W. Pickering of Ilkiston, and E. Whitaker, of Melbourne, preached; and were assisted in the devotional parts of the service by the ministers of the particular baptist and independent churches at Derby. After this event, the hearers increased; and the cause began to assume a more encouraging aspect. The small society invited Mr. James Taylor to accept the pastoral office over them; and he was ordained, March 30th. 1804; when Mr. Pollard addressed the minister, and Mr. S. Deacon the church. Preaching was then maintained at Derby, Alvaston, Barnaston, Allestrey, and Windley. Messrs. Barrow and Dallison, actively assisted the stated minister in dispensing the word; and for a short time the congregation increased. But, though the members continued, in a great measure, united and peaceable; yet the hearers soon began to decline and conversions were few. These discouragements induced Mr. Taylor to listen to the earnest invitations of the church at Heptonstall Slack, Yorkshire: and he left Derby, in Oct. 1807.

After his departure, supplies were obtained from the neighbouring societies, and a pleasing change ensued. The congregations became more numerous, and many were admitted to fellowship. In the spring of 1810, Mr. John Pike, who had been a member of the society in Churchlane, London, was invited to their assistance and removed to Derby. His labours were abundantly blest; fifty-eight being added to the church in the succeeding year. To accommodate these new converts and the increasing number of hearers, galleries were, in 1811, added to the meeting. But the congregations still continuing to increase, it

was proposed to erect a new meeting-house, in a more eligible part of the town; and considerable exertions were made to raise funds for this purpose. This design was, however, ultimately abandoned; and the old building enlarged and repaired, in 1814, at a considerable expence.

This rapid increase had caused discipline to be much neglected; and the baneful effects were beginning to appear. But, in 1816, a more regular attention was paid to order: and the church being divided into classes, proper persons were appointed to superintend their conduct and religious improvement; who held stated meetings with the people of their charges. These measures appear to have been rendered useful. In 1817, thirty were baptized; who raised the number of members to one hundred and fifty-four.

In the spring of 1807, Mr. Joseph Barrow, a valuable and zealous member of the church at Derby, became acquainted with Mr. Taylor, a respectable inhabitant of Duffield, a large and populous village, four miles north-east of Derby. The arguments of Mr. Barrow soon convinced his new associate, that believers' baptism was an ordinance of Christ; and he joined the society at Derby. Anxious that his neighbours also should have an opportunity of hearing the truth, he invited his friend to come and preach at Duffield. This invitation was promptly accepted; and Mr. Barrow delivered the first discourse, in that village, March 21st. 1807, from John 3:16. The attention of the inhabitants was greatly excited, and numbers crowded to hear the new doctrine. A room was hired and prepared for public worship, capable of containing two hundred auditors: and the neighbouring ministers kindly assisted Mr. Barrow in his labours of love. The blessing of God gave success to their labours; and many professed their faith in Christ by baptism. The room was soon found inadequate to the accommodation of the increasing number who thronged to hear; and Mr. Taylor having, at, that time, a large factory unoccupied, it was engaged and fitted up as a meeting-house; which was opened, by Mr. Stevenson, April 23rd. 1809. Four hundred persons might be conveniently accommodated in this room; and the expence, incurred by the necessary alterations, was cheerfully defrayed by the subscriptions of the friends of the cause. More than forty of the inhabitants of Duffield and its vicinity had then joined the church at Derby; and several candidates waited for baptism.

But, while the truth was thus spreading at Duffield, circumstances arose in the parent society which induced these new converts to secede from its communion. May 21st. 1810, they formed themselves into a distinct church, which then consisted of forty-seven members. Preaching was maintained at four adjacent villages, and three hundred hearers usually attended on the Lord's-day at Duffield. For two years their worthy and active friend, Mr. Barrow laboured diligently amongst them, in word and doctrine; and the ministers of neighbouring churches visited them every other Lord's day. Their efforts being crowned with success, and the sphere of their usefulness extending itself, it became desirable to obtain more regular ministerial aid. They accordingly invited Mr. Richard Ingham; who, having been called forth to preach the gospel by the church at Heptonstall-Slack of which he was a member, had spent some time at the Academy. He accepted their invitation and went to reside at Duffield, in Aug. 1812 when the society consisted of ninety members.

For a few subsequent years, the cause was supported with increasing success and great harmony. They carried the gospel to Shottle, an adjacent village; and met with much encouragement. In 1816, they purchased a house at Wirksworth, a market town about nine miles north-east of Duffield; and opened one of its large rooms for preaching; which they commenced under favourable auspices. About the same time, Mr. Barrow removing to a place near Turnditch, commenced a weekly lecture in one of his outhouses. While they were thus enlarging their borders, a difference arose amongst them, respect some parts of church order which caused an unpleasant altercation. Harmony, however, being soon restored, Mr. Ingham was called to the office of pastor. He was ordained, June 19th. 1819, when Mr. R. Smith delivered the charge to the minister, from 2 Tim 2:6; and Mr. James Taylor addressed the church, from 2 Cor. 7:16. There were then two hundred and three members; of whom forty three had been baptized, in the preceding year. Their prospects were encouraging, and their hearers increasing, so that most of their places for preaching were too small to accommodate them. Their worthy friend Mr. Barrow, who had been much blessed as an instrument in breaking up new ground, still continued his useful labours with zeal and activity.

The removal of Mr. W. Pickering from Ashford, cast a deep gloom over the general baptist interest in that place. On this event, Mr. Robert Bradbury, one of their own members, who a few years before had been called to the work of the ministry, was requested to assist them in a more regular manner. But his temporal circumstances prevented him from devoting so much of his time to the sacred work as the cause required; and compelled him successively to discontinue his visits to Bradwell, Abney and Wardlow. Preaching was indeed introduced into Lingston, near Ashford; yet the cause visibly declined. Frequent applications were made to the Association for assistance, and various of the ministers from sister churches visited them. But the distance of the situation rendered these visits unfrequent; and no permanent effect appears to have been produced. Coldness and disaffection increased, and, in 1811, a division took place in this small but scattered society. The friends at Abney and Bradwell, formed one church of nine members; and those at Ashford and its environs, another of about twenty.

After this division, the church at Ashford experienced a transient revival: eight persons joined it during the following year. Death, however, deprived them of several of their most valuable and useful members; and, in 1814, Mr. Bradbury declined the work of the ministry. A promising young member, who had occasionally assisted preaching, stepped forwards in this exigency; and endeavoured to supply the congregation. But his domestic duties not permitting him to devote much time, either to preparation for the pulpit or to the sacred work itself, he laboured under great disadvantages. In 1816, the number had decreased to sixteen; but it is pleasing to observe, that they then hoped "that vital religion was gaining ground, as their meetings were better attended."

The few friends at Abney and Bradwell, who seceded from Ashford, in 1811, were, for some time, supplied by the ministers from Yorkshire; but the distance and expence of these supplies prevented the continuance of them. They afterwards obtained assistance from two occasional ministers at Sheffield, who visited them, once a fortnight, till 1815.

What was their state afterwards does not appear; but it is probable, that, in 1817, their number had never exceeded nine.

Austrey is a large village in Warwickshire, about nine miles south-west of Ashby-de-la-zouch. Like too many of the country places in that neighbourhood, it had long been involved in great ignorance as to religious subjects. "Darkness had covered the earth and gross darkness the people." Various attempts had been made by other denominations to introduce the gospel into this village; but the rage of persecution and the want of support had rendered them, unsuccessful. In the beginning of 1802, Mr. Goadby, the general baptist minister of Packington, had an occasional interview with Mr. J. Barnes, a respectable inhabitant of Austrey; who, from an early acquaintance with a worthy member of the church at Castle-Donington, had learnt something of the truths of christianity. Mr. Goadby turned the conversation on the deplorable neglect of religion which prevailed in Mr. Barnes' neighbourhood and enquired if the latter would permit him to go and preach in his house: to which he replied, that he would think of it. The effects of this interview were important. Mr. Barnes went to Packington to hear the gospel: was happily convinced of its truth and value; and offered himself a candidate for baptism. He professed his obedience to Christ in this ordinance, May 15th. 1802. On the succeeding Lord's-day, May 22nd, Mr. Goadby went to Austrey; and preached his first sermon, in Mr. Barnes' wool-room, from 1 Tim. 1:15. This room, being large and convenient, was licensed and furnished with the necessary accommodations for a place of worship.

These attempts were crowned with success. Many attended the preaching of the gospel, and Some from distant places. Several respectable inhabitants of Austrey joined the church at Packington; especially Mr. J. Barnes, jun. the son of the first convert. Preaching was successfully introduced into various of the dark villages in the vicinity, and the prospect was encouraging. But the distance from Packington and the number of other places which the preachers of that society had to supply, rendered it impossible for them to give that attention to this neighbourhood which its importance required. The friends therefore determined to take the cause into their own hands; and Aug. 7th. 1808, were formed into a distinct church, by Mr. S. Deacon, of Barton. Their number then was fifteen.

This infant society had to struggle with many difficulties and was surrounded with enemies. The members endeavoured to obtain an acceptable minister; and invited Mr. Jarvis, of Longford, to their assistance. He removed to Austrey; but, in about a year, left them again destitute. For some time, supplies were obtained from Barton; till Mr. Barnes, Jun. impelled by the necessity of the case, attempted to give a word of exhortation to his brethren. His services were acceptable, and he became the regular minister. For several Years, he steadily and diligently pursued his great work; but though his labours were generally attended by numerous auditors, yet few declared themselves on the Lord's side. The members however were united, and zealous in their endeavours to spread the news of salvation on every side. The good seed, which they had been sowing in hope, at length produced most cheering fruit. Additions to their number were frequent; and in the four years previous to 1817, one hundred and one persons were baptized on a profession of

faith. The members of this society then amounted to one hundred and thirty one. They maintained preaching at nine places and had large congregations at each. Preparations were making for erecting a meeting house at Polesworth, a neighbouring village, at which the prospect was peculiarly encouraging.

Beeston is a large and populous village, five miles north-west of Nottingham in which no dissenters had established themselves till towards the close of the last century; when the Methodists obtained a few votaries, and erected a small chapel. At Chilwell, a little place near Beeston, Mr. W. Pickering, of Ilkiston, had frequently preached, and there two members of his church resided. At their invitation, several of their neighbours had accompanied them to Ilkiston, and had found the preaching of the gospel blessed to their souls. This encouraged the preachers at Ilkiston to visit this village more frequently; and the happy result was, that thirteen of the inhabitants of Chilwell professed their faith in Christ; were baptized, and joined the church at Ilkiston. But the affecting death of Mr. Twells,* and the removal of Mr. Stevenson, so diminished the number of ministers in that society, that it was found impossible to continue their usual labours at Chilwell: and indeed the house was shut against them in which they had been accustomed to assemble. This cast a deep gloom over the prospect; and the friends who could remove had already determined to fix their habitations in some place where they might more conveniently enjoy the means of grace.

[* This eminent Christian was, for twenty years, an honourable, active and useful member of the church at Ilkiston. He was very lively in religion, and enjoyed, in an extraordinary degree, the assurance of his interest in Christ. Though he never affected to be considered as a preacher, yet he was in the practice of going about to neighbouring villages to hold meetings for prayer and reading: and, for some of the last years of his life, he took frequent opportunities of addressing the people in a manner that evinced a deep sense of the wretched state of sinners, an ardent desire to promote their eternal welfare, and a strong attachment to the doctrines of the cross. These addresses were often blest to the souls of those who heard them. He was called to his reward, Oct. 2nd. 1803, in the forty-sixth year of his age.--Having to descend to inspect a coal-pit, through a defect in the machinery by which he was suspended, he was precipitated suddenly to the bottom, a depth of more than thirty yards, and received so much injury that he died in two days. He left a widow and seven children. G.B.R. Vol. I. p. 277.]

At, this juncture, Mr. Thomas Rogers,** who was then the assistant preacher in the church at Nottingham, determined, from motives of economy, to settle at Beeston and open a school. This he effected in Oct. 1803. Desiring that his family should have an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and being zealous to promote the eternal interests of his neighbours, he soon obtained permission to preach in a dwelling house at Beeston, which was occupied by a methodist; and not long afterwards a door was opened for his visiting Chilwell. For some time, he maintained regular service, on Monday evenings, at each of these villages in rotation; which were attended with an encouraging number of hearers.

[** Mr. Rogers joined the church at Nottingham, in 1792, and began to preach, May 16th. 1783. He was much employed, in subsequent years, in the villages about Nottingham, and in supplying neighbouring congregations. He frequently visited Ilkiston, after Mr. Goddard's secession; and in conjunction with Mr. Whittle, was very instrumental in improving the cause at Widmerpool and Broughton, which was then in its infancy and struggling under great difficulties, In 1799, his friends called him to assist Mr. Smith in the labours of the pulpit, and he retained that situation till his removal to Beeston.]

Mr. Rogers being convinced that, with proper exertions, an interest might be raised in this neighbourhood, relinquished his engagement with the friends at Nottingham, and resolved to devote his undivided attention to this object. The house at Beeston, in which public worship was commenced, being inconvenient he, with the approbation of his landlord, fitted up a large room in his own house for the purpose, which was opened, Jan. 1st. 1804. The attendance became numerous; and several professed to be convinced of the truth. It was, therefore, thought necessary to endeavour to form a society which might regularly receive these converts into fellowship. The church at Ilkiston declining to dismiss their members who resided at Chilwell, eight members of Nottingham church, four of whom dwelt at Beeston and four others at a short distance, were cordially dismissed to lay the foundation of a new interest. Mr. R. Smith went over to Beeston, March 4th. 1804; and delivered a most affectionate exhortation to the members of this infant church, and afterwards preached to a crowded and attentive auditory. The few friends who had thus united were soon afterwards joined by the thirteen members of Ilkiston church at Chilwell, and two members of another society who were settled in the vicinity. May 20th. five candidates, the fruits of Mr. Rogers' ministry, were accepted by the church, and baptized in a pond, in Mr. Rogers' croft, amidst a large concourse of well behaved spectators. On July 27th. twelve other persons were baptized; and, Oct. 21st. following, fifteen others made, in the same manner, a public profession of their faith. Almost every week, during many succeeding months, one or more professing to be convinced of their sins, desired communion with this increasing society; and early in 1805, twenty persons were baptized in one day, and added to the church. Most of these candidates were arrived at years of maturity, and some were advanced in life. In many cases, husbands and wives, and, in more than once instance, whole families, gave themselves up together to the Lord and to his people.

This society having thus increased to eighty members, and the congregation being proportionably numerous, the room in which they assembled become too small to accommodate them. As it temporary expedient, Mr. Rogers occupied a barn which was then empty: and though it was cold and very inconvenient, it was soon filled with serious hearers. It was, therefore, a matter of urgent necessity, that some more suitable place of worship should be provided. The subject was laid before the Midland Conference and the annual Association; and both these assemblies recommended the erection of a new meeting-house. Weekly subscriptions were immediately commenced by the friends at Beeston; and the neighbouring churches liberally assisted in the design. A piece of ground was purchased, and a commodious edifice raised, which was opened, Aug. 24th. 1806. On this occasion, three dissenting ministers from Nottingham, of different sentiments, cordially engaged. Mr. R. Smith, a general baptist, preached in the Morning;

Mr. Alliott, an independent, in the afternoon; and Mr. Jarman, a particular baptist, in the evening. The utmost harmony prevailed; the place was crowded on all parts of the day; and the collections at the door were liberal. The whole cost of the building was upwards of four hundred pounds.

The church continued to increase; and Mr. Rogers, who had been chosen an elder, was desired to administer the ordinances. It was, however, judged necessary to invest him, in a more formal manner, with the pastoral office. He was, therefore, publicly ordained, May 20th. 1807; when Mr. Felkin delivered the introductory discourse, Mr. R. Smith gave the charge to the minister, and Mr. W. Pickering addressed the people. But the progress of the cause afterwards was less rapid. Domestic bereavements induced Mr. Rogers to remove his residence to Nottingham: and, though he continued to preach regularly at Beeston, yet he could not so incessantly watch over the interests of his friends there, as when he dwelt in the midst of them. In 1810, he settled at Stapleford, a village three miles south-west of Beeston; and commenced preaching in his own house, with a view to strengthen the cause at Beeston. In the following year, he extended his labours to Long-Eaton, another village at nearly the same distance west of Beeston. At both these places there was an encouraging attendance; and a small chapel was built at Stapleford by a friend, who, let it to the church on reasonable terms.

But the public distress, which was felt in all parts of the nation, began now to press heavily on the friends at Beeston, and especially on their pastor; whose means of support were, in a great measure, intercepted. His people saw with pain the injury that his domestic circumstances were receiving; and, though unanimously desirous of his continuance with them, they thought it justice to set him at liberty from his engagements. This they did: and he received invitations from several other churches to remove to them. But, being sincerely attached to his friends, he determined to make every effort before he forsook them. He struggled on till Christmas, 1813; when, finding it impossible to subsist at Beeston, he accepted the call of the church at Fleet, in Lincolnshire. The society at Beeston then consisted of one hundred and one members.

Though the removal of their highly esteemed pastor checked the progress of this rising cause; yet the congregations continued to be encouraging and several persons soon afterwards joined the church. Peace and unanimity were preserved in their councils: and, for a time, supplies were kindly afforded them by the neighbouring congregations. Mr. Bull at length became their more regular preacher, and the cause seemed to prosper in his hands. But, in 1817, the stagnation of trade and dearness of provisions affected them severely; and obliged them to suspend their efforts at Stapleton and Long-Eaton; though they had previously collected large congregations at each of these places. They therefore continued their public labours to Beeston, where they preached thrice on the Lord's-day; and, in the afternoon, had a numerous auditory. The members then amounted to one hundred and six.

We have already observed, that, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, there existed a cluster of general baptist churches in Cheshire, and the adjacent counties, which were then numerous and respectable. The society at Nantwich, a considerable market town in

Cheshire, appears to have been of note amongst them. It probably owed its prosperity, if not its formation, to Mr. Samuel Acton, who, for many years, presided over it with great diligence and success. He was by trade a tobacconist, and possessed some property; the ground on which the meeting-house stands having been presented by him to the church. We have no information when he began his ministry; but it was probably before 1688.* The ground, which we have just mentioned, was conveyed to him, Sept. 19th. 1695; and he was then established in trade. In 1704, he published a treatise, which he called, "Fruit from Canaan; or Foretastes of Glory: in several Discourses on Assurance," from Heb. 6:9. At that time, he was a leading man among his friends; and dedicates this book "to the churches of God in Cheshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire," &c. From this dedication, we learn, that he had previously experienced violent persecution, probably of a religious nature. He addresses his brethren thus: "Glad I am of any opportunity to signify the grateful acknowledgments of my soul, for your love in striving together with me and for me, in your prayers to God; whereby I firmly believe my deliverance was furthered, from the violence of them who rose up against me, and threatened my ruin, without cause. But since I have escaped, as a bird from the snare of the fowler, I cannot but warble forth the praises of God, who has pleaded my cause, and given me so pleasing an issue; by restraining the wrath. and turning away the insults of those who would have rejoiced in an opportunity to have triumphed over me. To Him, therefore, must the vow be performed, which strongly binds me more diligently to minister in the place where God by his providence has set me."

[* In 1718, Mr. Acton published a small piece, which he called, "Naked Truth: or, a Plea for Union." In this he describes himself as "a man in years;" and says that he had, for more than forty years, lamented the inconveniencies arising from needless contentions; and for more than thirty years, had been striving, though to little purpose, to persuade christians to lay them aside." The worthy author's object is to promote an union between the general and particular baptists. In order to this, he briefly but perspicuously states the views of the former, on those points in which they differ from the latter; and endeavours to prove that they are agreeable to scripture. "The principal and main points of difference," he says, "are these four. 1. God's Decree about Election and Reprobation. 2. The Universal Love of God to Man. 3. General Redemption by Jesus Christ. 4. The Certainty of Perseverance." This pamphlet excited a considerable sensation in the neighbourhood; and his opponents there, not thinking themselves qualified to refute it, sent it to their friends in London. The author, therefore, in the following year, published "An Appendix to Naked Truth:" in which he endeavours to strengthen his sentiments, by additional, arguments. We notice this work to shew, that the heresy of the general baptists, in these parts, was then confined to the points connected with personal Election, and did not extend to the more important subjects of the Divinity and Atonement of Jesus Christ. This is still more clearly evinced by the agreement of the church at Nantwich with Mr. Kiwber, alluded to already, in the Note to page 262.]

Mr. Acton's abilities and character were highly esteemed by his contemporaries, and he was frequently appointed to preach at their associations. Several of the discourses which he delivered, on these occasions, were printed: and, in 1723, being prevented by indisposition from attending the association, he published the sermon which he had

designed to preach, from Psa. 4:3, under the title of "The Lord's Favourite." It is probable, that he was then advancing towards old age; as in the following year, the church invited Mr. Isaac Kimber, of London, to settle with them as a minister; "upon the reasonable supposition," as they express it, "from brother Acton's age and very sensible decays, that the church would, ere long, want a man to minister to them in his room, in the word and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the furtherance of their edification and salvation,," In this measure, the zealous old man cordially acquiesced; and himself subscribed ten pounds annually towards Mr. Kimber's support. The agreement was dated, July 8th. 1724; and signed by twelve sisters, and, and twenty-two brethren: the principal of whom, if we judge from the amount of their subscriptions, were John Goodall, John Wright, Ralph Orton and James Maddock.

Mr. Kimber did not reside long at Nantwich. Difference of sentiment, on some important points of doctrine, caused a separation; and he returned to London. How long Mr. Acton survived, is not known; but, in a good old age, he was called to the church above; and his remains were deposited in the meeting-house. Many of his most useful and respectable friends were removed about the same time; and the cause appears to have gradually declined. Not being able to procure ministers of their own persuasion, the church permitted Mr. Pine, a particular baptist, to occupy the pulpit: but his distinguishing tenets not being approved by the people, he was, not without difficulty, dismissed. Not long afterwards, the methodists obtained possession of the meeting-house; and, for many years, enjoyed the use of it without interruption.

[* In 1714, Mr. Acton published a pamphlet, containing three sermons. 1. "The Christian's Salvation all of Grace," from Eph. 2:5. 2. "Christ's Ministers Soul Compellers," from Luke 14:23. 3 "Wise Men but Fools in rejecting God's Word," from Jer. 8:9. During the printing of this volume, queen Anne died, and George I. was quietly called to the throne. The author took the opportunity of adding a Postscript, addressed to "Dissenters in general;" in which, after cautioning them "not to wrap themselves up in a groundless fancy that the king was coming to single them out for his favourites," and advising them to behave themselves discreetly in the favourable change of affairs, he concludes thus: "Whatever others do, I hope you, my brethren of the baptized churches, will distinguish yourselves by loyalty, modesty and peaceful behaviour, as becomes a people worthy of your privileges and of such a king: whose reign let the God of heaven grant to be long, glorious and happy, to and over all his people. Amen."--The good man had felt the miseries of the tyranny of the Stuarts, and duly appreciated the blessings of the Protestant succession. The other publications of this minister are--"Slowness to Anger the truest Gallantry," from Prov. 16:32. 1713--"The Royal Charge," from 1 Chron. 28:9. 1715--"To honour God the sure Way to Honour," from 1 Sam.2:30--"Union with Christ our Hope of Glory," from Col. 1:27. 1721.]

Before the close of the eighteenth century, all traces of the general baptists had nearly disappeared: not one person being left at Nantwich, who professed to be of that denomination. Two members of the church at Barton were then in the habit of frequently visiting Nantwich on business; and formed an acquaintance with Mr. John Cooper and some others, who were zealously attached to the methodists. On comparing their

sentiments on religious subjects, they found a considerable coincidence, except on the point of believers' baptism: and this topic was, of course, frequently discussed between them. The Nantwich friends, at length, yielded the, victory to their opponents; and professed themselves willing to evince their sincerity by being baptized. This result was reported to the church at Barton: and that society thinking it deserved attention, requested Mr. J. Deacon to visit Nantwich, and make further enquiries. He went in Sept. 1812, and learnt, that the meeting-house occupied by the methodists belonged to the general baptists, and that only two of the trustees survived. On his return, he laid the subject before the midland conference at Loughborough: and it was there agreed, to nominate eleven persons as trustees, to whom the property might be transferred; and to request Mr. R. Smith to take a journey to forward the business. This he did, in December following; and succeeded in recovering the meeting-house.

On the 17th of the succeeding month, Mr. T. Stevenson, of Loughborough, baptized three persons at Nantwich, and formed them into a church. The ministers from the midland and Yorkshire districts visited them as often as circumstance would permit; and Mr. Cooper, one of their number, was encouraged to preach for them in the intervals. Before the Association in 1813, nine had been baptized; and this infant society was then enrolled on the list of churches forming the New Connection. In subsequent years, many others were admitted: but, owing to the ravages of death, and the disgraceful conduct of some who went back to the world, the number of members remained nearly stationary. The interest, however, gained ground: and June, 1817, they make this encouraging report. "The general baptist cause here wears a more favourable aspect than it did. We are peaceable and united, and trust that vital religion is reviving amongst us." The labours of Mr. Cooper and his friends had then been extended to Torperly, a large village ten miles north-west of Nantwich; where seven persons were baptized, Sept. 14th. 1817.

Knipton is a village in the north-east of Leicestershire, bordering on Lincolnshire. At this place there is an ancient society of general baptists, the origin of which we have not been able to ascertain. In the early part of the eighteenth century, it was under the care of Mr. John Wortley. He was succeeded by Mr. John Bissill; and the church then consisted of about thirty members. After Mr. Bissill's decease, Mr. T. Smart, the minister at Wimeswould and Mountsorrell, occasionally supplied them with preaching, till Mr. R. Stokes settled amongst them. While he laboured for them, the meeting-house was built. This was scarcely finished, when he removed to London: and they were again kindly assisted by their former friends at Wimeswould. In 1769, this church joined the Lincolnshire Association. It was then destitute of a pastor; and remained, in the same state, in 1711. Mr. Boyce, the messenger, was requested to visit it, as often as convenient; and that active minister cheerfully complied with their request. This society was then respectable; consisting of between fifty and sixty members, two deacons, and one stated unordained preacher. The minister was, probably, Mr. Joseph Proud, Jun. from Wisbeach; who attended the Association both these years, and is ranked among "the brethren in the ministry." Mr. Proud remained with them only three or four years, and then left them without supply. They once more turned to the ministers at Wimeswould for assistance, and appear to have been, for some time, united with that church: as they tell the Lincolnshire Association, in 1788, that "they were well attended both at Wimeswould

and Knipton." At that time, their number was reduced to thirty-six: and they were under the pastoral care of Mr. W. Kelsey, who attended the same Association, in 1785, as "the elder of the church at Knipton." Mr. Kelsey continued to preside over this people eleven years, till towards the close of the eighteenth century, when discontent arose in the society: his temporal circumstances became embarrassed; and his abilities were enfeebled by age. A separation followed. Mr. John Bissill, one of their members, was, about this time, called to exercise his gifts in preaching; and, for a season, assisted in supplying the pulpit: but he soon left them; and, in 1799, went to pursue his studies at the Academy.

The cause appears to have been then in a low state, as, in 1861, there were but sixteen members. These were frequently visited by Mr. Hoe, of Hose, who preached for them every fortnight, for four or five years: and his labours appear to have been very useful. As he was united to the New Connection, he advised them to leave the Lincolnshire Association, and attach themselves to his friends. Accordingly, in 1800, they applied for admission into the New Connection: and, the following year, were received. After this, there appeared transient symptoms of a revival: eight persons being baptized in 1802. But Mr. Hoe discontinuing his visits, they speedily declined: and want of preachers, joined to neglect of discipline, had, in 1814, diminished their number of members to ten. They were then in a deplorable state; having been deprived of preaching during the whole year, except two or three occasional sermons. In these dark circumstances, their only two male brethren united, to conduct a prayer-meeting on the Lord's-day. In 1816, Mr. J. Turner settled among them as their regular preacher; and they began to hope for better times: but, in the following year, he removed; and they were again left without the regular ministry of the word. Their number was then but eleven.

**SECT. 2.--A Sketch of the History of the Churches in the Northern District,
from A.D. 1800 to A.D. 1817.**

For a short time after the commencement of the nineteenth century, affairs in the church at Birchcliff went on prosperously; their congregations were large, and additions frequent. But the conduct of their pastor soon became inconsistent with his profession, and caused much trouble and dissatisfaction. In Jan. 1803, abruptly left the neighbourhood: and was excluded from their fellowship. Supplies were, at first, obtained from the neighbouring churches, and the peace of the society was restored; and they soon turned their eyes to Mr. James Taylor, of Derby, and made some unsuccessful efforts to obtain him. Thus disappointed, they requested Mr. W. Hollinrake, a respectable member of their body, to exercise his talents in preaching; and being satisfied with his attempts, called him to the work of the ministry. He then joined with the other ministers in supplying their own pulpit, and was often invited to preach for sister congregations. His labours, both at home and abroad, were acceptable; and, under the divine blessing, rendered very useful. His friends already began to look on him as likely to supply their need. He wished, however, to avail himself of the advantages offered by the Academy, and went to London, July 1804; where he spent a year Mr. D. Taylor. During his residence there, he was invited, by his brethren, to accept the office of pastor; and, after proper deliberation, complied. He returned to Birchcliff, and commenced his regular labours there, July 30th. 1805.

Soon after his return, symptoms of discontent shewed themselves, which; for a season, caused great uneasiness and much discouragement, both to himself and his friends. But the majority, being satisfied that, in supporting him, they were following the leadings of divine Providence, determined to persevere and the numbers who crowded to hear him, with the frequent instances of his discourses being blest to the awakening of his auditors, strengthened them in their resolution. He was accordingly ordained to the pastoral office, July 1st. 1805; when Mr. D. Taylor, of London, gave the charge and Mr. E. Whitaker, of Melbourn, addressed the people. Though these proceedings were warmly approved by a decided majority of the society, yet a respectable minority doubled of their propriety: and, as it did not appear probable that they could cordially co-operate in carrying on the cause of the Redeemer, they resolved to, separate from their former friend. When this resolution was fully taken, the parties met, by mutual agreement; and, commending each other, in affectionate prayer, to the favour of God, took a friendly leave. After this division, about eighty members remained at Birchcliff.

From this period, the cause of the Redeemer prospered in this place; and Mr. Hollinrake's labours were abundantly blest. The congregations increased, both in number and respectability: and, from the return of their pastor from the Academy to June 1817, upwards of two hundred persons had been baptized and added to the church. And though death had deprived them of many useful and pious members; and they had, in some painful instances, been obliged to withdraw from such as walked disorderly yet the' number then amounted to one hundred and ninety-nine. They enjoyed peace among themselves; their congregations were large; and they had two assistant preachers.--In 1808, a piece of ground was presented to this society, by a neighbouring gentlemen, by which the burying-ground was enlarged, at an expence of nearly forty pounds.

The persons who withdrew from the church at Birchcliff in the commencement of 1807, amounted to forty-two. They united to carry on the cause of the Redeemer; and engaged an old meeting-house* at Heptonstall-Slack, about a mile and a half distant from Birchcliff. In this building, they commenced public worship, and obtained supplies from Queenshead and Halifax. The congregations were encouraging; and it soon became evident to ail parties, that the separation would prove to the interest of religion in the neighbourhood. This persuasion had a happy tendency to remove opposition, and to procure this attempt the, countenance of all who wished for the extension of the kingdom of the Redeemer. The friends at Slack naturally desired a settled minister, and soon turned their attention to Mr. James Taylor of Derby. The subject was brought before the Association at Nottingham, in 1807: and that assembly encouraged his removal. Accordingly he settled at Slack, in October following.

[* This meeting-house had existed almost a century. Mr. Thomas Greenwood, a gentleman of the neighbourhood, built it, and preached in it. After his death, it was frequently unoccupied. Mr. R. Thomas, for a long time, laboured alternately here and at Rodwell-End: and Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Fawcett preached in it regularly, till his new place of worship was erected at Hebden-bridge. From that time, it lay almost useless, till the seceders from Birchcliff obtained possession of it. After the opening of their new place at

Slack, it was employed as a school through the week, and afforded good accommodation for their Sunday-scholars on the Lord's-days.]

Mr. Taylor's character and labours being well approved, the cause gained ground rapidly the congregations increased so as to be much too large for the old meeting-house; and several joined the church. All ranks of persons in the neighbourhood wished success to the rising interest, and evinced a disposition to encourage it. In these favourable circumstances, the friends thought it advisable to provide a more commodious place of worship. They obtained, from the gentlemen of Heptonstall, the grant of a piece of ground from the common, in a very eligible and conspicuous situation. On this they erected a substantial and convenient meeting-house; to which were attached a spacious burying-ground and a handsome baptistery. The place was opened, Oct. 6th. 1808, by Mr. John Taylor, of Queenshead, with a discourse on Eph. 2:21. The expence of the meeting-house and burying-ground was nearly seven hundred pounds; exclusive of a dwelling-house for the minister, which was built at the same time. After the erection of the meeting-house, the cause continued to advance: but Mr. Taylor could not soon be induced to assume the pastoral office over this affectionate people. At length, he determined to devote himself to their service; and was solemnly set apart, Oct. 25th. 1810: when Mr. Hollinrake opened the service, by reading the scriptures and prayer; Mr. John Taylor gave the charge to his son, from 1 Tim. 1:18; and Mr. D. Taylor, of London, addressed the church, from 1 Thess. 5:13. On the following Lord's-day, seven brethren were ordained to the office of deacons; to whom Mr. John Taylor delivered a charge, from 1 Tim. 3:13.

The church, being thus regularly organized, carried on the blessed cause in which they were engaged with vigour; and the Lord was pleased to crown their exertions with success. The congregations were numerous, and the members increased with rapidity. Prior to the Association, in 1817, one hundred and fifty-seven had been baptized; and the society then consisted of one hundred and seventy-seven members. Harmony prevailed in their deliberations, and the neighbours continued to be friendly. They had then four assistant ministers whom they had called to the work, and who were well approved.

The small church at Shore, under Mr. J. Spencer, experienced a considerable revival in the commencement of the nineteenth century. The pastor applied with diligence and zeal to the duties of his office; and increased in usefulness and respectability. Their congregations, considering the situation, were numerous; and the number of additions encouraging. In 1807, the members had increased from nine to forty-three; and a pleasing degree of harmony and affection reigned amongst them. But the infirmities and age of Mr. Spencer, who had now reached his seventieth year, checked this growing prosperity. The cause drooped in his feeble hands; few were converted; and the hearers diminished. In 1817, their number was reduced to thirty-six: and though they were then tolerably peaceful amongst themselves; yet the state of religion was low.

In 1800, we left the church at Queenshead oppressed with poverty, and their pastor incapable, from bodily infirmities, of those strenuous labours in which he had formerly been abundant. This depression continued for a few subsequent years; and was increased

by disunion and disaffection among themselves: so that, in 1803, their number had sunk to fifty-seven. But, about that time, a pleasing change took place. Harmony and affection were restored to their councils; and their esteem and love to their pastor revived. His labours, therefore, were more useful; the congregations increased, and many were added to the church. In order to accommodate the numerous hearers, two side galleries, as large as the meeting-house would admit, were erected, and other alterations made. The expences of these improvements were borne by the friends, with the liberal assistance of their neighbours, who shewed a strong disposition to encourage them. In 1807, the progress of the cause here was checked by the building of three places of worship by the methodists, within less than a mile of the meet house at Queenshead. This naturally lessened the hearers, and divided the attention of the neighbours. The effect, however, was only temporary: in a few years, their hearers again became numerous and additions frequent. Though death deprived them of many valuable members, and some forsook the good way; the cause of the Redeemer still gained strength. The pastor, indeed, grew every year less capable of active exertions; but, with a few short interruptions, he was enabled to fill the pulpit on the Lord's-day and to superintend the concerns of the church. The kindness of his friends excused and supplied his lack of service; and he had the uncommon felicity of seeing that cause, over which he had watched for so many years with a parent's anxiety, and for which he had long laboured with persevering assiduity, revive in his old age, and flourish in his weakness. In 1814, seven deacons were ordained, to manage the temporal concerns of the society; and three young men, whom they had called to the work of the ministry, were acceptably engaged in preaching the gospel. In 1817, the number of members had increased to one hundred and forty-two. In that year, they, in conjunction with the ministers of neighbouring churches, commenced preaching, with some encouraging prospect of success, at Apperley Bridge, a village about nine miles south-east of Queenshead.

The church at Halifax continued under the pastoral care of Mr. Joseph Ellis, during the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century. In the former part of that period, the cause was low and discouraging; but a pleasing degree of unanimity prevailed amongst the members. In 1805, the meeting-house was altered and repaired, at a considerable expence; which was cheerfully defrayed by the subscriptions of the friends and neighbours. They hoped that this step would be advantageous to the drooping interest; and their hopes were not wholly disappointed. From that time, the hearers gradually increased, and several came forwards from time to time, and joined the church. In 1817, fourteen were baptized on a profession of faith. And, though the peace of the society was repeatedly interrupted by internal dissensions, which caused some of the members to withdraw from its fellowship, and several valuable friends were removed by death, yet the cause continued to gain ground. In 1817, this society consisted of seventy-one members, who were peaceful and unanimous.

The few friends at Burnley experienced great discouragement during the period now under review. The character of Mr. Folds was so unstable and irregular, that, in 1804, they were compelled to withdraw from him, both as a member and a minister. Another person was then employed to preach for them, and they ventured to repair the meeting-house. The expence increased their former debt to a sum which, though small in itself

was a grievous burden to the few poor friends who supported the cause in this place. To add to their depression, their minister's character and pursuits were found to be totally inconsistent with his sacred profession; and, in 1807, they were obliged to dismiss him from their fellowship. At this time, the interest of religion, which had received so many dreadful wounds in the house of its friends, was almost expiring. The number of members was reduced to ten; and the hearts of those few who still stood in the breach fainted within them. They resolved, however, to continue the struggle, and invited assistance from the Yorkshire churches. This mode of supply was continued for upwards of two years, and produced a happy effect. In the beginning of 1810, Mr. George Dean, who had for some time been in assistant preacher in the church at Queenshead, being repeatedly invited by this society and advised by the Yorkshire Conference, removed with his family to Burnley, and became their regular minister. His labours were well approved, and the people exerted themselves to render his situation comfortable. This long depressed cause shewed symptoms of a revival, and some respectable neighbours appeared disposed to countenance it. In 1817, the number of members had risen to twenty five, among whom peace and harmony prevailed; and the prospect of future prosperity was encouraging.

Towards the conclusion of this period, the friends at Shore had observed, that many persons attended their public worship from the valley that stretches towards Todmorden, and even from places beyond that village. This induced the friends of religion to turn their attention to those parts; and Mr. James Taylor visited Todmorden, and preached there, Dec. 3rd. 1814. A worthy individual, encouraged by the prospect of usefulness, exerted himself with great zeal to obtain the assistance of a few friends in establishing regular preaching in this neighbourhood. After considerable perseverance this was effected; and a room was hired at a place called Lidgate, about two miles from Shore. The subject was laid before the Yorkshire Conference and several ministers engaged to supply the place in rotation, for some months to come. As supplies could be obtained only for the morning, and evening, the friends were advised to employ the afternoon in an experience meeting. This greatly assisted those who had turned their faces towards Zion, by accelerating their growth in grace and knowledge. These young christians soon began to wish for the privileges of church-fellowship; and presented a case to the Conference at Shore, Aug. 27th. 1816; soliciting directions how to obtain them. After due consideration, it was concluded, that it would be advisable to form them into a distinct church; and Messrs. Ellis, Hollinrake, Hodgson and Dean, were requested to visit Lidgate, and carry this advice into effect. Accordingly, Nov. 30th. 1816, they went, and baptized eight persons; whom they formed into a society, and to whom Mr. Ellis administered the Lord's supper. The spectators and auditors behaved with seriousness and attention, and the solemnity was pleasing and edifying. In June, 1817, this infant church consisted of eleven members; who were peaceful and unanimous, and whose prospects were encouraging.

Stayley-Bridge is a populous and genteel manufacturing village in Lancashire, on the borders of Cheshire; about eight miles east of Manchester. To this place, Mr. Barker wandered, when he had left Birchcliff; and procured a creditable situation in a factory. As he still pushed himself amongst professors of religion, the methodists engaged him to preach for them on Christmas-day, 1804. This arrangement being made by the people

without consulting their leaders, the latter interfered after the morning service, and prevented him from preaching in the evening. Some of his associates, thinking him not well used on this occasion, determined to support his cause. The necessary measures were taken; and, in a few weeks, he commenced public worship in a large room in his own occupation, and soon became popular. At first, he ranked with no particular denomination; but, in 1806, he declared himself a general baptist. Towards the close of 1808, he baptized twelve persons and formed a church. His hearers increased rapidly: and a more capacious place of worship became necessary, and was obtained. The number of members soon rose to upwards of sixty, and every thing appeared prosperous.

But the prospect soon darkened. In 1813, twelve of their members, disapproving of the principles and conduct of the preacher, withdrew from their communion and formed a distinct society, which afterwards attached itself to the particular baptists. In the following year, this church and its founder applied to the Association at Birchcliff for admission into the New Connection; but that assembly promptly refused to form any union with them. Soon after this application, the conduct of the preacher gave painful evidence, that he was totally unfit for the station he had assumed, and a separation ensued between him and the people. This disgraceful event, plunged these young professors into the utmost perplexity. Many forsook them, and turned to the world: but, there was a goodly number who were earnestly engaged with their Saviour, and could not desert his cause. They were depressed with reproach and sorrow, and knew not how to attempt to support the sinking interest. These affecting circumstances being reported to the Yorkshire churches, their ministers generously stepped forwards, and endeavoured to collect and organize this scattered flock. Their visits, which were regularly repeated for many months, produced the happiest effects: the congregations increased; several joined the church; and the friends of the truth began to assume new courage.

The Yorkshire ministers continued to supply them, till the Association, in 1815; when they laid the case of this rising interest before that assembly. In consequence of the information and advice which Mr. W. Pickering received on that occasion, he removed with his family to Stayley-bridge, towards the close of the year; and became their regular minister. At the following Association, this church was admitted into the New Connection: when the number of members was sixty; of whom, twelve had been baptized and nine restored, during the preceding year. In 1817, their members were increased to eighty: they then enjoyed peace, and religion was advancing among them. Their public seasons of divine worship and their more private meetings were well attended; and they had introduced preaching into Ashton-under-line. One young man among them had been called forth to preach the gospel, and promised to be useful and acceptable.

From this hasty glance of the proceedings of these churches, it appears that the general baptist cause had made a pleasing progress, in the northern district, during the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century. The number of societies had indeed only risen from six to eight; but the members which composed these churches, who, in 1800, amounted only to one hundred and ninety-two, had, in 1817, augmented to seven hundred and forty-one: and in most places the prospect of future prosperity was highly encouraging.

In the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century, death made awful inroads on the church at Boston. The progress of the cause was low and additions few; but, in 1804, there appeared symptoms of a revival; fifteen persons being added that year by baptism. In 1806, being deprived, by an affecting dispensation of providence, of their venerable deacon, Mr. Stephen Small,* they called two brethren to that important office. Though many were added to their fellowship, yet the frequent ravages of death, for several years, kept down their numbers: no fewer than fifteen valuable members of this comparatively small society being removed to the church above, in the short space of two years previous to 1812. This prevented their increase and weakened their hands: and, in the following years, they complain of lowness, in. activity and trials. In 1817, they had ninety-three members.--In 1809, Mr. W. Bampton was called by this church to the work of the ministry.

[* This pious and useful christian was about seventy-five years of age; and had been an honourable member of this church for upwards of fifty years. He was liberal to the poor, and generous in the support of religion: often repeating his favourite maxim, "God loves a cheerful giver." He set out to go to a prayer-meeting, on the evening of Jan, 19th. 1806, and was found, sometime afterwards. dead in the river. It appeared probable, that, through an awful mistake, he had walked into the water, at the quay, when he intended to go over the bridge. A few days after his funeral., Mr. W. Taylor, his pastor, improved the affecting event, from the appropriate exhortation of our blessed Saviour, "Be ye also ready." G. B. R, Vol. II. p. 88.]

Mr. Trolley continued to preach at Maltby, for it short, time after the commencement of the present period, and then removed to Alford. After his departure, Messrs. J. Jarrom, W. Smedley, and N. Hurst, who were successively stationed at Louth, laboured occasionally for this people. Mr. Cameron settling at Louth, in 1803, agreed to preach at Maltby once a fortnight, on the Lord's-day afternoon; and continued this mode of supply, till 1811. His labours here attracted many bearers, and the meeting-house was generally crowded; but few came forwards to declare themselves on the Lord's side. His successor, Mr. J. Stevenson, adopted the same plan of supplying Maltby; but, finding the congregation to decrease, in 1814, he discontinued his visits. In subsequent years, being almost deprived of the public means of grace, the decline of the interest was rapid. In 1816, this society had sunk to seven or eight aged members: and the meeting-house was occupied, one part of the Lord's-day, by a follower of the late Mr. Johnstone, of Liverpool.

The first year of the nineteenth century was marked, at Fleet, by the baptism of three persons, a brother and two sisters, from Gedney-Hill, a village about eleven miles north of Fleet which laid the foundation of an important accession to the cause at that place. In 1803, Mr. Pocklington, one of their members was called forth to preach the gospel, and was usefully employed in the adjacent villages. For several subsequent years, a diversity of sentiment on some important doctrinal points, occasioned much uneasiness and

altercation; and issued in the loss of several who had been useful and respectable members of this society. This gave a check to the progress of religion, but the steadiness, zeal, and affection of Mr. Burgess, the pastor, in a good measure, prevented the mischief that otherwise might have been produced. The cause continued to gain ground; and, about this time, attempts were made by this church in conjunction with Spalding, to introduce the general baptists into Holbeach, a market town a few miles distance. The meeting-house which the methodists had occupied was hired, and preaching commenced; but these attempts proved unsuccessful. July 26th. a house was registered at Sutton St. James, six miles south of Fleet, when Mr. Burgess preached the first discourse there, from Acts 7:42.--In the following year, the practice of singing was adopted into the public worship of this society. In June 1808, Mr. H. Everard was called to the ministry by his brethren at Fleet; as was Mr. W. Smith, in 1810.

The members of this church residing at Gedney Bill had now increased to fifteen. Preaching had been established in this village for several years, and the labours of Mr. Everard, their principal supply, were approved and blessed. The spirit for hearing which had been excited, rendered the congregations too large for the dwelling-house in which they had hitherto assembled; and it was determined to build a meeting-house. One of their friends generously made them a present of a piece of ground, and a neighbouring gentleman kindly advanced pecuniary aid. The design was at length accomplished, at an expence of nearly two hundred pounds. This commodious place of worship was opened, April 12th. 1811, by Mr. Burgess, of Fleet, and Mr. Jarrom, of Wisbeach: who preached, the former from 1 Cor. 1:23, 24; the latter, from Luke 15:7.

In 1812, this society renewed its application for admission into the New Connection: and, as the causes of the former objection were removed, it was, at the subsequent association, unanimously received. It then consisted of one hundred and seven members, and the cause was prosperous. Preaching was maintained, every Lord's-day, morning and evening, at Fleet; and in the afternoon at Lutton.

But the health of Mr. Burgess began now to decline, and he was not able to exert himself in the work of the ministry as he had formerly done. An asthmatic complaint, which gained strength daily, obliged him to forbear preaching in winter on the Lord's-day evenings. He was seized with a violent attack of this disorder, on the night of Nov. 30th. 1813; but recovered so far as to be able to preach a funeral sermon, on Dec. 2nd. and afterwards to attend a church-meeting. The exertion and the coldness of the weather greatly increased his complaint; and Dec. 11th. 1813, he was released from mortality and all its pains. His remains were interred in the meeting-house, as a mark of the affection and respect of his mourning people; and the day following his death was observed by the church as a season of fasting and prayer. Mr. Binns, of Bourn, preached his funeral sermon. Dec. 16th. to a crowded and weeping auditory, from Psa. 72:26, a text which had been chosen by Mr. Burgess a short time before his dissolution.

In a few weeks after the decease of their lamented pastor, the friends at Fleet turned their attention to Mr. Rogers, of Beeston, who paid them a visit, Feb. 1814. His labours and character were so satisfactory, that he was unanimously invited to accept the pastoral

office. He complied; and settled at Fleet in the following August. He commenced his labours with zeal and affection; and the blessing of the Lord rendered them very successful. In 1817, the number of members had risen to one hundred and thirty; and the cause of religion was advancing both at Fleet and Gedney. Six preaching stations were then occupied by this society; and at each of them the congregations were numerous.

Through the whole of this period the state of religion at Killingholm wore a discouraging aspect. The congregations were indeed as numerous as could be expected; but conversions were few. For some time Mr. Atterby preached for the friends here; but they depended, during the greatest part of this interval, on the labours of Mr. E. Hunter. His temporal circumstances were low, and he was much afflicted with a rheumatic lameness: he could not, therefore, exert himself with that perseverance and vigour which the drooping cause required. And though, towards the middle of this period, one or two young men joined this society, and afforded him valuable assistance, yet little progress was made. In 1816, the members were thirty, who lamented the low state of religion amongst them.

The church at Gosberton continued destitute of a regular minister, till the spring of 1802; when Mr. John Bissill left Wimeswold, and, settling at Sutterton, a village about four miles east of Gosberton, became its constant preacher. He laboured with diligence, zeal and success; and the cause extended itself into neighbouring places. Mr. Bissill was ordained to the pastoral office over this society, Oct. 24th. 1805. On this occasion, Mr. D. Taylor, of London, addressed the minister, from Prov. 23:15, 16; and Mr. J. Deacon, the church, from 1 Thess. 5:12, 13.

For a short time after this solemnity, the cause of religion prospered abundantly: the congregations increased, and the members who, in 1802, had sunk to twenty-seven, amounted, in 1807, to seventy-two. But, in the close of that year, indisposition obliged Mr. Bissill to suspend his exertions; and this suspension was soon followed by a division in the church: the friends at Sutterton and its vicinity withdrawing, in the following spring, and leaving only thirty-five members at Gosberton. At first, they obtained supplies from neighbouring churches; but, though the congregation continued considerable, yet the cause declined. In 1809, Mr. C. Biggs returned to them, and laboured amongst them till Michaelmas, 1812. On his departure, they depended for preaching chiefly on their own friends, Messrs. Clark and Anderson; who endeavoured to supply the wants of a more regular ministry. In 1815, Mr. W. Bampton, who had for some time assisted at Sutterton, removed to Gosherton; and divided his labours between the two congregations. This arrangement appears to have been useful; as they reported, in 1817, that they were well attended with hearers, and hoped that the prospect was, on the whole, encouraging. Their number then was twenty-two; of whom five had been baptized the preceding year.

When Mr. Bissill first settled at Sutterton, the neighbourhood was almost totally ignorant of dissenters, and paid very little attention to religion. The methodists had, indeed, a few weeks previously, registered a small house in the village, which was occupied by a person whose wife had been connected with the general baptists; but Mr. Bissill being

invited to preach in it, the methodists discontinued their visits. He, continued, therefore, to preach there regularly, on the evenings of the Lord's-days; and the house was soon crowded with hearers. This place being found too small and in other respects inconvenient, several of the friends exerted themselves; and a new and commodious meetinghouse was erected, at an expence of three hundred pounds; which was opened, by Mr. D. Taylor, of London, Sept. 29th, 1803. After some time, Mr. Bissill, finding himself incapable, through weakness of body, of preaching twice every Lord's-day at Gosberton, and once at Sutterton, relinquished the morning service at the former place; and, when his strength was in some measure recovered, commenced service in the morning and evening at Sutterton; visiting Gosberton in the afternoon. At first, the congregations in the mornings were small; but they gradually increased, till they became too large for the meeting-house.

The pleasing effects were not confined to this village. The family of a gentleman at Fosdike, a place a few miles to the eastward of Sutterton, having attended with profit on Mr. Bissill's ministry, he licensed one of his own houses, in the summer of 1805, and invited that minister to declare the way of salvation to his neighbours. This invitation was gladly accepted; and preaching was maintained there regularly every Friday evening, for several years. In the summer following, another generous friend, at his own expence, hired a room at Kirton, near Boston, in which Mr. Bissill conducted a weekly service on Thursday evening. The attendance at Kirton was encouraging, though little permanent good was effected; but, at Fosdike, the hearers were numerous, and several were brought to profess faith in Christ.

But these vigorous exertions to spread the gospel, undermined the health of the pastor; and brought on a complication of disorders which compelled him to retire, though very reluctantly, from the active duties of the ministry. On this occasion, a misunderstanding arose among the members of this flourishing church, which issued in a division. In the spring of 1808, the friends who resided at Sutterton and its vicinity, who had been hitherto reckoned members of the church at Gosberton, formed themselves into a distinct society, consisting of thirty-one members; and invited Mr. Bissill to take the oversight of them.

This, minister's indisposition continuing, the congregation was supplied with preaching by the friendship of the neighbouring ministers, till Midsummer, 1809; when Mr. James Smith, who then laboured at Kirton in Lindsay, was united to settle with them, as an assistant to the pastor. He accepted the invitation, and removed to Sutterton in the following August. The hearers had begun to decline previous to Mr. Smith's arrival, and this declension became afterwards still more visible. Discontent arose, which led to alterations; and parties were formed. The peace of the church was destroyed, and the progress of religion retarded. The congregations at Sutterton were still more diminished by these intestine contentions; and the houses at Fosdike and Kirton, in which preaching had been maintained, with such a prospect of success, were thereby shut against the ministers. At length Mr. Smith left the neighbourhood, and harmony was restored; but the interest of the Redeemer had received a check, which it could not speedily recover,

In 1811, Mr. W. Bampton, who had been called to the ministry by the church at Boston, was invited to settle at Sutterton; and Mr. Bissill had then so far recovered his health as to be able, in some measure, to resume his pastoral duties. The cause gradually recovered strength, and the congregations improved at Sutterton; but the ground gained at the outposts was irretrievably lost. Attempts were made, in 1811, to introduce the gospel, into Swineshead, a village about six miles north-west of Sutterton; and a house was licensed for that purpose. But, when the time arrived, the occupier refusing his consent, Mr. Bissill preached in the street; and continued that practice through the summer. Towards winter, a place was fitted up for public worship, which would accommodate two hundred persons; and preaching was supported in this place, with various interruptions, for several years. Some success attended the attempt, but its distance and the want of ministers retarded the progress of the cause; and induced them, in 1817, to discontinue their visits. In 1812, some unsuccessful efforts were also made to establish a station for preaching at Algarkirk. In 1814, death deprived this society of several valuable members, which, in connection with the discouraging aspect of the times, and the precarious state of the pastor's health, cast a still deeper gloom over the prospect. In 1817, the number of members was twenty-six, and they complained that the word was attended with little success.

The church which Mr. John Smith had gathered at Tydd St. Giles' gradually improved under his care, till Jan. 24th. 1807; when, after a fortnight's indisposition, he was removed by death, in the sixty-second year of his age. His remains were interred in the meeting-house which his friends owed to his liberality; and Mr. Burgess, of Fleet, preached his funeral sermon, from Psal. 12:1. After his decease, Mr. Pocklington, an occasional preacher at Fleet, was invited to assist this people, and laboured for them several years. Though the congregations were considerable and harmony prevailed in their councils, yet additions were few. In 1810, preaching was commenced at Tydd-Gote, a neighbouring village, and the hearers were numerous. Desirous of obtaining a settled pastor, these friends invited Mr. James Smith, who had lately left Sutterton, to settle with them. His labours were highly approved and greatly blest. The cause revived, and seventeen persons were baptized in the following year. Mr. Smith was, therefore, ordained, June 3rd. 1813: when Mr. Burgess gave the charge, and Mr. Jarrom addressed the church. About this time, a few friends at Sutton St. James, a place in the vicinity, to which Messrs. Burgess and Everard had extended their labours with encouraging success, withdrew from the church at Fleet, and joined the church at Tydd St. Giles'. Mr. Smith, therefore, preached at Sutton; and the hearers increasing, it was thought necessary, in 1814, to provide more suitable accommodations. A neat meeting-house was accordingly erected; which was soon filled with attentive hearers. In 1817, the congregations were numerous, at all the three places, where they maintained regular preaching; and the members, which in 1811, were only twenty-three, had then risen to sixty-five.

The church at Wisbeach early in the nineteenth century, invited Mr. Joseph Jarrom, who had been some time at the Academy, and was then supplying at Louth, to settle with them. He complied; and removed to that town, Jan. 1802. Soon after his arrival, the hearers increased, and pleasing symptoms of revival appeared. The meeting-house, which was old, decayed and very inconveniently situated, having become too small for the

congregation, it was determined to erect a larger one in a more eligible part of the town. This new building was opened, Oct. 27th. 1803, by Mr. D. Taylor, who preached in the morning and afternoon; and Mr. W. Burgess, who delivered a discourse in the evening. The prospect still continuing to brighten, Mr. Jarrom was requested to take the oversight of this church; and was ordained to the pastoral office, May 22nd. 1804; when Mr. D. Taylor addressed the minister, from 2 Tim. 2:15, and Mr. Pollard, of Quorndon, the people, from 1 Thess. 5:12.

From this period, the society of general baptists at Wisbeach gradually increased in number and respectability. The hearers were numerous; additions frequent; and their minister highly approved and respected. In 1812, it was found necessary, for the accommodation of the auditors, to erect two side galleries in the meeting-house. And though, in subsequent years, death made affecting inroads on their numbers, yet, in 1817, the members amounted to one hundred and four, who gave this encouraging account of the state of religion amongst them: "The peace of our church, the prosperity of vital godliness in the members, the number and seriousness of the hearers, and the attention paid to church meetings and prayer meetings, are not less than in former years:" when they had represented the interest as flourishing.

For a few years after the commencement of the nineteen century, the church at St. Ives' exhibited some symptoms of prosperity. Regular preaching was supported at Fenstanton and Warboys; and the congregations at both of those places, as well as at St. Ives', were numerous. Thinking that a more commodious place of worship might tend to the advancement of the cause, they determined, in 1806, to sell the old meeting house, and purchased a building in a more eligible which they fitted up, for their religious assemblies: the whole expence amounting to six hundred pounds.

A slight revival followed; but, it was partial and transient. During the last eight years of the period under review, no additions were made to the society, and the members gradually decreased. Mr. Birley's strength and health failed; and, for the greater part of that interval, he was wholly laid aside from preaching. Supplies were obtained from various parts of the Connection; but no permanent good was effected.

In 1817, they stated, that religion continued to droop; and their congregations were small. The number of members then was twenty-seven.

Though the whole of the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century, the church at Kirton in Lindsay was destitute of a pastor. Mr. J. Smith, of Thorne, removing to this place, in 1805, his labours were blest, and several additions were made to their number. But, in 1809, he accepted an invitation at Sutterton, and they were again left without a regular ministry. The preachers from the Yorkshire churches frequently visited them, during subsequent years, and their efforts retarded the decline of the cause. It continued, notwithstanding, to droop; and its most sanguine friends felt apprehensions for the issue. In 1815, an exertion was made, with a hope of raising the interest; and, as the meeting was in an inconvenient situation, very damp, and hastening, to decay, a new one was erected in an eligible part of the town. But the want of proper ministerial supplies

prevented the good effects of this measure; and, in 1817, the members had sunk to thirty-one, who gave this affecting account of their state: "Our situation is truly distressing. The cause is rapidly declining; and should not Providence interpose, we are in danger of being overwhelmed. At present, the friends at Epworth kindly assist us once a fortnight."

Louth is a respectable corporate town in Lincolnshire, twenty-eight miles north-east of Lincoln. At this place, there was formerly a general baptist church, of which we have not been able to obtain any particulars. It had totally disappeared in 1800, and the meeting-house was offered for sale. There were no dissenters in the town besides the methodists, and religion was in a low state. These circumstances being laid before the Association, held at Spalding, in 1800, it was resolved to purchase the meeting-house and endeavour to raise a church. Mr. D. Taylor, at the request of this assembly, went to Louth and purchased the building for two hundred pounds. For a short time, the place was shut up; but public worship was soon commenced, and supported by the occasional visits of Messrs. R. Smith, W. Taylor, and other ministers. Mr. Jarrom went from the academy to Louth, in the beginning of 1801; and laboured there regularly till the following Christmas. His preaching attracted the attention of the neighbours, and was blest to the conversion of several; but, being under a prior engagement with the friends at Wisbeach, he removed at the close of the year. Mr. W. Smedley, another student, succeeded him; and carried the good work forwards with diligence and success. The subject was again submitted to the consideration of the Association, in 1802, when it was agreed, that it would be for the interest of religion to form a regular society at Louth: and Messrs. R, and W. Taylor were requested to take a journey thitherto carry this resolution into effect. They accordingly went, Sept. 12th. 1802; and five candidates were baptized, with whom twelve others, who had formerly been members of baptist churches, united themselves. These seventeen persons were formed into a society, to whom Mr. Smith delivered a discourse on the order of a christian church, and administered the Lord's supper.

Mr. Smedley, after spending upwards of a year at Louth, returned to the Academy to finish his studies. His place was occupied by Mr. N. Hurst, whose efforts were productive to the church. He was obliged to leave them at the expiration of four months; though he afterwards made them another visit. Mr. F. Cameron, who had then completed his preparatory studies under Mr. D. Taylor, was stationed at Louth, after Mr. Hurst's departure. His labours and character were highly approved; and the interest daily acquired strength and respectability. No fewer than eighteen persons were added by baptism, in 1805; and the members then amounted to fifty-nine. They therefore invited Mr. Cameron to become their pastor; and he was ordained to the sacred office, July 4th. 1805. On this occasion, Mr. D. Taylor delivered a charge to the minister, from Col. 4:17; and Mr. W. Burgess preached to the people, from Deut. 3:28.

After the ordination of Mr. Cameron, the cause of religion prospered for several years. The pastor and his flock strove together to promote it; and the great Head of the church crowned their united exertions with his blessing. In 1807, the increase of the hearers made it necessary to erect a gallery. But, in 1810, Mr. Cameron resigned his office, and discontinued his stated labours among this people. This cast a temporary gloom over the prospect. The church, soon afterwards, invited Mr. Joseph Stevenson. the pastor of the

society at Coningsby, to their assistance; and he removed to Louth, in Nov. 1810. For several years, his services were acceptable, and harmony prevailed. Additions were not unfrequent; but various subjects of discontent occurring from time to time, several withdrew, and the number of members remained stationary. In 1813, there were seventy-eight in fellowship, and preaching was regularly supported at five adjacent stations, besides Louth. But unhappy events tended to foster the seeds of discontent; and animosities were carried so far, that nearly thirty of the members withdrew from the society; and the cause seemed hastening to ruin. At length, in 1845, Mr. Stevenson's connection with this church ceased; and Mr. Jones, who had been pursuing his studies at Wisbeach, was invited to preach. His services were well approved, and the breaches, which former discord had made, were gradually repaired. Many of those who had withdrawn were restored to their stations; and, in less than two years, twenty were added by baptism. In 1817, the numbers had increased to eighty, "who were peaceable and united: and the number and seriousness of those who attended the ministry of the word, encouraged them to hope, that the work of the Lord was advancing."

We have already hinted, that the general baptist cause at Spalding had, at the formation of the New Connection, sunk very low. We have not been able to collect any further particulars respecting it, till 1766, when Mr. Rusling settled at that place. It is probable, that only six or seven nominal members of that once flourishing society then remained. But such was the effect produced by his vehement zeal, that, in the two months previous to his ordination, seventeen candidates were baptized. This encouraging success made his friends impatient for a closer union; and, in Oct. 1787, he was ordained to the pastoral office over them, by Mr. G. Boyce, the messenger. In the following year, he attended the Lincolnshire Association, and proposed to unite his church with that body. It was received with pleasure by that declining assembly, and esteemed a valuable acquisition; but the union lasted only a few years. For a season, the cause advanced rapidly; and, in less than four years, fifty-one members were added to the church by baptism and recommendations. In the latter years of his eldership, there was, however, an affecting reverse. Being of a violent disposition, and supposing his labours slighted, his public discourses became pointed, and his language censorious. This imprudent conduct naturally increased the dissatisfaction of his auditors, and inflamed their resentment. An open rupture was the disgraceful result and in 1797, he was excluded from the society.

Being, thus left destitute, the Spalding friends turned their eyes to Mr. John Bartol, a worthy member of the church at Gosberton, who, though advancing in years, had been only recently called to the work of the ministry: and he visited them, for a short time, as a supply. They soon afterwards, probably at his suggestion, applied for admission into the New Connection, to the Association at Halifax, in 1798; and requested advice respecting the removal of Mr. Bartol, to Spalding. That assembly discouraged the design, and advised them to look for a younger preacher. Mr. Bartol and his friends, however, ventured to act on their own judgment. He was ordained to the pastoral office, Nov. 22nd. 1798: when Mr. Burgess gave the charge, from 1 Cor. 1:7; and Mr. Binns addressed the church, from 1 Thess. 5:13. At the same time, Messrs. Lawson and Neale were ordained deacons; to whom Mr. Briggs gave an admonition, from 1 Tim. 3:13. At the next

Association, this church was admitted into the New Connection, and the number of members then was twenty-two.

The congregations increasing and the prospect brightening, it was thought proper to give their old place of worship, which had stood more than eighty years, a thorough repair. This was completed previous to the Association, in 1800, and the alterations gave great satisfaction. Mr. Bartol's labours being well approved, the congregations continued to increase, and the cause daily gained strength. The members had risen to forty-two, when an unexpected event cast a sudden gloom over every mind. On the morning of July 18th. 1810, their pastor, who had then attained his seventieth year, being employed in pruning a fruit tree which was trained to the walls of his house, by some accident, fell from the ladder, struck his head against the ground, dislocated his neck, and instantly expired. This affecting dispensation was improved by Mr. Burgess, at Gosherton, where Mr. Bartol was interred, from 2 Cor. 5:8; and at Spalding, from Psal. 12:1.

But the cloud, which the loss of this venerable pastor had spread over the interest in this neighbourhood, was quickly dispersed. Mr. H. Everard, an occasional minister, at Fleet, was invited to assist the friends at Spalding; and his visits were so well approved, that, at their earnest request, he became their regular preacher. His stated labours soon drew such crowds of hearers that the place of worship was too small to accommodate them; and it was judged expedient to pull it down, and erect one on a larger scale. This was accordingly done; and the new, commodious and spacious meeting-house was opened, Nov. 7th. 1811, with three appropriate discourses, by Messrs. Bissill, of Sutterton, W. Taylor, of Boston, and W. Burgess, of Fleet. Increasing success crowned their subsequent exertions; and the friends were unanimous and earnest in requesting Mr. Everard to accept the office of pastor among them. He was, therefore, ordained, May 21st. 1812. Mr. Burgess delivered the charge, from 1 Pet. 5:2-4: and Mr. W. Taylor preached to the people, from 1 Thess. 5:12, 13. On the same day, Mr. Butters was ordained to the deacon's office, and Mr. Binns addressed him, from Acts 6:2, "Serve Tables."

In the following years, Mr. Everard's health was so seriously affected, that he was, for a considerable time, laid aside from the active duties of his station. The disorderly conduct of some of the members likewise greatly retarded the prosperity of the cause. But, in the midst of these discouragements, religion advanced. The congregations were large and attentive; and, in 1817, the number in fellowship had increased to sixty-two.

We have already seen that the general baptists at Bourn, formed one society with the friends at Spalding and Fleet, till towards the close of the seventeenth century, when they became a distinct church under the pastoral care of Mr. J. Hooke. The cause seems to have prospered in his hands, and to have extended itself to various adjacent places. In 1717, a few friends united and purchased certain premises; on which they erected a commodious meeting-house; and conveyed it to the "baptized believers at Bourn for ever." The principal persons concerned in this good work were, Mr. R. Ives, sen. R. Ives, jun. J. Arnold, W. Hussey, and J. Richardson; and the cost appears to have been nearly one hundred pounds. A short time after this erection, in June 1720, this church contained

sixty-three members: of whom thirty resided at Bourn, and the rest were scattered over many adjacent villages.

As the duties of the messenger's office, frequently called Mr. Hooke to distant places, his friends were obliged to seek for a supply of preaching during his absence. Mr. J. Halford, the pastor of the church at Coningsby, having settled at Bourn, an arrangement was made between the two societies, in 1725, for him to administer the ordinances at Bourn. The death of Mr. Hooke, in 1736, left Mr. Halford sole minister; and he appears to have discharged the pastoral duties amongst them till July 4th. 1759; when he was removed by death.* Some time after this event, Mr. Young from Yarmouth settled here, and was ordained, Aug. 30th. 1761, by Mr. Boyce. He sustained the pastoral office for thirty years; but the interest declined under his care. At the period of his decease, Sept. 27th. 1791, only four or five nominal members remained; and the form, as well as the power of religion had nearly disappeared. For a few years, the preachers from Spalding paid occasional visits to Bourn: and, in 1794, Mr. Porter settled with them; but the irregularity of his conduct compelled him, in a few months, to quit the town.

[* In a note to page 120 in this volume, it is stated, that Mr. Halford's death was occasioned by a mistake of his apothecary. This we have since learnt, is not correct. The person to whom that accident occurred was Mr. Ives, a member of this church, who was occasionally employed in the work of the ministry.]

In these destitute circumstances, the few persons who still adhered to the cause applied for assistance to the ministers of the New Connection, in Lincolnshire; who held their quarterly conference, at Bourn, Sept. 24th. 1794. At this meeting, various preachers were mentioned, as likely to suit them; and, after some ineffectual overtures to others, they finally turned their attention to Mr. Binns of Gosberton, to whom they gave an earnest and unanimous invitation to settle amongst them. He laid the case before the Lincolnshire Conference, April 7th. 1795; and that assembly, after a serious and circumstantial investigation, gave an opinion in favour of his compliance. He accordingly removed to Bourn; where his services were highly blest. He was therefore requested to assume the pastoral office; and ordained, April 19th. 1796: when Mr. Burgess gave the charge to the minister, from 1 Tim. 4:16; and addressed the people, from Heb. 13:7.

After this solemnity, Mr. Binns prosecuted his sacred work with increased vigour. He extended his labours to neighbouring villages; and at Morton the hearers were so numerous, that the usual place of preaching could not hold one fourth part of them. He therefore preached in the open air, throughout the summer of 1798. In the following year, the improvement of their prospects encouraged them to repair and enlarge the meeting-house at Bourn. In this year, they made application for admission into the New Connection; and, in 1799, were, received. The number of members then was thirteen; religion they hoped was reviving; and regular preaching was maintained at Bourn, Morton, and Castle-Bytham.

But, in the decay of the cause, discipline had been much neglected. One principal object, therefore, of the pastor's solicitude, was to reestablish order in this reviving society. His

efforts for this purpose were much assisted by the co-operation of Mrs. Gibson, a worthy member of this church. Being a person of large property and good natural abilities, she was highly respected and had great influence in the town as well as amongst the members. Convinced of the propriety and importance of the reforms proposed by the minister, she exerted all her interest to carry them into effect. She continued to be an effectual "fellow labourer" in the work of the Lord, till June 7th. 1800; when she died, full of hope and joy in the Saviour.

The cause at Bourn gradually improved and the members and congregation increased; but various causes contributed to render the progress slow and uncertain. In 1806, they were obliged to discontinue their visits to Castle-Bytham but, about the same time, they opened two other places. The succeeding year however produced more pleasing events: fourteen being added to the church by baptism, and the increase of hearers rendering it necessary to enlarge the meeting-house. From this time, the revival was more rapid: and, though the disorderly conduct of some who had professed to devote themselves to the Lord, the death of several valuable members, and the removal of others to distant abodes, tended to lessen their prosperity; yet, in 1817, the members amounted to fifty-four, and the congregations were generally numerous. It appears from the former part of this work, that the general baptists had formed a society at Peterborough, in Northamptonshire, during the, protectorate of Cromwell; but of its future proceedings we have not been able to obtain any regular account. In 1718, Mrs. Dorothy Ewen, of Peterborough, probably a member of this church, bequeathed certain houses and lands to trustees, the rents and profits of which were to be applied towards the support of a minister "to preach the gospel to the general baptists, at Peterborough." Towards the close of the same century, Mr. Moyses was their pastor for a number of years; but, in the latter part of the time, seldom preached, because he could not collect a congregation. Mr. Poole, of Wisbeach, also, for some time, received the emoluments of the office: though, for similar reasons, he very seldom was called to discharge its duties. In 1794, the cause had sunk so low, that only two members remained, and the property was in danger of being lost. In these circumstances, Mr. Peel attended the Lincolnshire Conference, at Boston, June 20th. 1794, and laid the particulars before that meeting. Such advice was then given as was thought most likely to secure the property and revive the expiring interest. After some further arrangements, the ministers who composed this conference agreed to supply Peterborough with preaching once a fortnight on the Lord's day, and as often on the week-day evening. The remaining members of the ancient society were, at the same time, joined by several other inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who stood in fellowship with distant churches.

This mode of supply was continued till May, 1797, when Mr. S. Wright, who had been an occasional preacher at Spalding, removed to them, and became their regular minister. His labours were made useful; and, though he encountered some opposition, yet the cause gained strength. In less than two years, the old meeting-house, which was gone to decay, was taken down and a new one erected; and some advantageous alterations were made in the endowment.

In 1798, this society applied for admission into the New Connection; but its name does not appear on the List of Churches till 1801; when it consisted of eighteen members, and its seasons of worship were well attended. An unhappy dispute in 1804, retarded the progress of religion. The breach however, was soon healed; and, for many succeeding years, a regular improvement was visible: the congregations were encouraging; the members gradually increased, and some attempts were made to carry the gospel into neighbouring villages. In 1817, the persons in fellowship amounted to thirty-four; and the prospect was then cheering.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, a general baptist church existed at March, a market town in the Isle-of-Ely, about twenty-six miles north-west of Cambridge: the origin of which we have not been able to trace. It was then under the pastoral care of Mr. Thomas Mears, who died, in 1735, aged sixty-six years. After him Mr. Jeremiah Buckland presided over this society till 1744, when he also was removed by death. In a few months after his death, Mr. T. Mills removed from Spratton in Northamptonshire; and, settling at March, was invited soon afterwards to take the oversight of this people. He sustained the pastoral office for more than fifty years; but, towards the close of his ministry, as he advanced in years, a degree of dissatisfaction arose and the cause declined.

In order to revive the drooping interest, it was agreed to invite the neighbouring ministers to preach for them occasionally: and about 1790, Messrs. Birley of St. Ives, Freeston of Wisbeach, and Scott of Chatteris, paid them frequent visits. In 1792, Mr. T. Ewen, who had been called to the ministry by the church at Fleet, removed his habitation to Walsoken, and became a member of the society at Wisbeach. Besides regularly assisting Mr. Freeston, he occasionally supplied destitute churches. Among other places, he was invited to March; and delivered his first discourse there, Dec. 9th. 1792. During the nine succeeding months, he visited them only a few times; but his services were so well approved, that, in Oct. 1793, the pastor and people united in requesting him to preach for them once a month. In the following May, he consented to visit them once a fortnight, and continued thus to supply them, to their great satisfaction, till the end of the following year.

January 1796, Mr. Mills, being then in his eightieth year, was induced, at the request of the church, to resign the pastoral and ministerial offices, and Mr. Ewen was invited to preach for them statedly; except once a month when Mr. Freeston visited them and administered the Lord's-supper. It was soon evident that Mr. Ewen's more constant labours were made useful; the congregations increasing, and in the course of the first year, thirteen persons being added by baptism. This pleasing success induced him, May 18th 1797, at the earnest intreaty of the people, to remove his residence to the scene of his exertions.

His first care, was to restore regular discipline, which had been too much neglected, and stated church meetings were appointed. He also extended the sphere of his labours; and, in the following year, commenced preaching at Doddington, a village some miles south of March. The congregation had increased so much in 1799, that it was determined to

erect a new meeting. house at March. Many of the wealthy friends of religion, both members and others, entered heartily into the design; and upwards of three hundred pounds were immediately subscribed towards carrying it into effect. It was therefore prosecuted with vigour; and completed, at an expence of more than six hundred pounds. Mr. D. Taylor, of London, preached the first discourse in this new building, Oct. 1799, from Exod. 20:24. About the same time, this society applied for admission into the New Connection; and, in 1800, was admitted. Preaching, which was then maintained at March, Doddington, and Wimblington, was generally well attended and the members were forty-four.

For several succeeding years, notwithstanding this encouraging success, Mr. Ewen declined accepting the pastoral office, and the church depended on the occasional presence of an ordained minister for the administration of the Lord's-supper. But, the cause continuing to prosper and the affection of his friends to increase, he at length yielded to their wishes; and was ordained, Aug. 1805. On this occasion, Mr. Burgess, of Fleet, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Pollard, of Quorndon, gave the charge to the minister, from 2 Tim. 2:15; and Mr. Freeston, of Hinckley, addressed the people, from Phil. 1:2.

Being now fully organized and enjoying the regular participation of all the privileges of church-membership, they proceeded with increased vigour and alacrity: and though they had to encounter the usual difficulties and experienced their portion of those trials which are common in this imperfect state, the interest still gained ground. In 1813, they enlarged the galleries of the meeting-house which was filled with attentive bearers. In 1817, the number of members had risen to ninety-one, and the congregations continued to increase.

A place of worship was erected at Forncett St. Peter's, Norfolk, about the middle of the eighteenth century, and was occupied by various parties in succession. Soon after the close of that century, Mr. J. Hall, who had been a member of the church at Fleet, settling at Barham, opened a school and commenced preaching in it. Learning that the person who then preached at Forncett, which was only six miles distant, had been baptized by immersion, and approached, in many things, to the sentiments of the general baptists, he paid him a visit; and proposed an occasional exchange of labours. This was readily agreed to; but soon afterwards a difference arose between the preacher at Forncett and his people, which ended in a separation. On this rupture, Mr. Hall was invited to remove to this place and become their minister. For some time, he declined leaving Barham; but, at length, he yielded to their wishes and removed to Forncett, in Nov. 1813.

Here he commenced his labours with zeal and diligence; and, being assisted and encouraged by the occasional visits of the ministers from the Lincolnshire churches, his labours were crowned with success. In June, 1814, three persons were baptized by Mr. Binns of Bourn; and, being joined by five others who had been formerly members of baptist societies, a church was formed, consisting of eight persons; which, the same year, was placed on the List of Churches composing the New Connection.

In the following three years, the progress of the cause was rapid. Many were baptized; and Dec. 25th. 1816, Mr. Hall was ordained over this rising society; when Mr. Jarrom addressed the minister, from 1 Tim. 4:16; and Mr. Binns the people, from 1 Thess. 5:13. On the following evening, two of the brethren were set apart to the office of deacons; to whom Mr. Binns delivered a charge, from Tim. 3:10. Great exertions were made to extend the news of salvation into the dark places of the vicinity; and, before June, 1817, regular preaching was established at eight of the adjacent villages. The members had then risen to sixty-nine, who were peaceable, united and zealous; and the congregations were increasing in numbers and respectability.

The Isle of Axholme, situated in the north-east corner of Lincolnshire, was early a noted station of the general baptists, who probably gathered a society there during the time of the civil wars, or under the protectorate of Cromwell. It appears, from the tattered remains of their Records, that, in 1673, this church consisted of nearly one hundred members, scattered in various towns and villages; but chiefly residing at Epworth and Butterwick, which afterwards gave their united names to the church. Messrs. John Norfolk and John Shaw were joint elders of this society. The former of these ministers died, in May, 1678; but the latter continued in his station for more than thirty years; as his signature is affixed to the minutes of a meeting for discipline in 1705. [During his ministry, the cause seems to have prospered; for we are informed by an author who wrote against the baptists, in 1700, that the river Torn, in the Isle of Axholme, was then famous for dipping Hooke's Necessary Apology]; and, in 1699, a piece of land was given to this society for a burying-ground, by John Ile, one of its members, which was fenced in by a voluntary subscription.

We can learn no more particulars of the proceedings of this society, till 1738, when it is probable, that affairs had gone to confusion through the neglect of a proper attention to order. At a meeting for discipline, on March 13th. of that year, at which Mr. Johnson the messenger presided, it was agreed to hold regular church-meetings every four months, and to chose Israel Cotton for their pastor, and Cornelius Chamberlain and William Keighley for deacons. Messrs. Cotton and Chamberlain were ordained to their respective offices, April 13th. 1739, by Air. Johnson; but we hear no more of Mr. Keighley. Mr. Cotton was a native of the Peak, Derbyshire; a pious christian and diligent pastor. The cause of the Redeemer flourished under his care; and several young men were then called forth, by this church, to preach the gospel, who afterwards became useful ministers. Amongst these was the late Mr. W. Thompson, of Boston; whose father was, for many years, an useful and honourable deacon of this society. How long Mr. Cotton was pastor, does not appear: he attended the Lincolnshire Association, in 1758, and probably lived some years beyond that date; as his successor, Mr. Edward Foster, was not ordained till 1765,

Mr. E. Foster was a member of this society, and had been occasionally employed in the ministry before Mr. Cotton's death; when he was chosen pastor, and held that office for forty eight years. but his ministrations were not of a character to support the cause: and, though Mr. W. Anderson, who filled the deacon's office, contributed much by his piety and activity to promote its prosperity, yet it evidently drooped. After the decease of Mr.

Anderson, the decline was rapid: the most interesting doctrines of the gospel were seldom introduced in the public discourses, and discipline was almost totally neglected. The natural consequences ensued: the congregations dwindled away, few joined the church, and the ancient members became formal, cold and dead.

This declension continued to increase for several years, and the interest seemed hastening to destruction, when a pleasing and unexpected revival took place. A few young men, who had been roused to an attention to eternal things, by the preaching of the methodists, determined to search the scriptures for themselves, and follow what they taught. They were soon convinced, that believers' baptism was sanctioned by those Oracles of truth; and, in consequence, offered themselves, in 1812, as candidates for fellowship with the general baptists. They were accepted and baptized; and, being zealous and hearty in the cause of religion, their example and exertions soon produced the happiest effect. In Aug. 1813, Mr. Foster was removed by death; and, Mr. D. Cheeseman, who had for some time been engaged as an assistant preacher, was ordained to the pastoral office, in Sept. following. He was assisted in his exertions to bring sinners to the Saviour by these zealous young associates. Their labours were crowned with the divine blessing; and many soon gave themselves up to the Lord in his own ordinance.

June, 1815, this church was received into the New Connection. It then consisted of thirty-six members, who were comfortable and unanimous; and their religious services were well-attended. In the following year, fourteen were baptized, and preaching was established at Messingham, a neighbouring village, with encouraging prospects. In 1817, the number of members was fifty: they had one pastor and three assistant preachers; the hearers were numerous at Butterwick and increasing at Epworth; and harmony reigned in the society.

It has been already observed, that, in the seventeenth century, a number of respectable general baptist churches existed in Northamptonshire and the adjacent counties. One was at Haringworth, under Mr. Stephen Curtis, who suffered fines and imprisonments for his adherence to the truth. He was pastor in 1716, when he must have been advanced in years, and probably did not long survive. In 1729, the church consisted of forty-five members. Mr. Matthew Stranger was pastor of this society in 1745; when they purchased a meeting-house at Morcot, in Rutlandshire, a few miles west of Haringworth, and removed their public assemblies to that place.

[The church at Morcot, during the eldership of Mr. M. Stanger, reckoned amongst its adherents, if not members, the noted William Whiston, M.A. Thirty-five years before that date, he had been called, as a minister of the Church of England, to baptize two adult persons who had not been baptized in their infancy. On this occasion, one of the candidates, struck probably with the propriety of the preparatory examination, asked him: "Would it not be better if baptism were deterred till after instruction, than used before it?" To this Mr. Whiston had replied. I" honestly confess, that I should myself have thought so: but, I am no legislator; and submit to what I take to be a law of Christ." When the business was over, and he reflected on what had passed, he felt dissatisfied, that he had been forced to allow that this law of Christ was not so right as it might have been. He

therefore determined to examine the New Testament, (in which he included the Apostolical Constitutions,) and the most early fathers, in order to ascertain what they meant when they spoke of the baptism of infants. The result was a discovery, that those infants were capable of instruction; and that none were admitted to baptism, during the first two centuries, who had not been previously instructed in the principles of christianity. With his usual frankness, he published this discovery, in 1712, in a piece which he called "Primitive Infant Baptism Revived," and sent it to many of his friends who were dignitaries in the national church. Amongst others he sent it, by an intimate friend, to Sir, Isaac Newton, who returned for answer, that he had already made the same discovery, and, as Mr. Whiston afterwards learnt, was so hearty in his approbation of the baptists, that he believed them to be one of the two witnesses, mentioned Rev. 9. Though Mr. Whiston so far paid homage to truth as, after this conviction, to refuse to baptize any literal infants, yet he maintained a kind of grumbling union with the establishment, till he reached his eightieth year: when, being disgusted by the introduction of the Athanasian Creed, he forsook her assemblies, and in 1747, attached himself to the general baptists at Morcot; regularly attending at their public worship, and sometimes assisting in conducting it. In order to justify his conduct, he published a "Friendly Address" to his new associates; in which he enumerates their excellencies at full length, and with equal candour, reminds them of several "imperfections" which he had noticed in their system. "A full and particular answer" to this piece was drawn up by Mr. Grantham~ Killingworth, in a Letter to the author, dated May 11th. 1749, and published, after Mr. Whiston's death, in 1757. Whiston's Memoirs, page 205, &c.]

In 1747, the small general baptist church at Oakham, in the same county, which was then reduced to nine members, united themselves to the church at Morcot. Mr. William Stanger was pastor of this people in 1770; and a considerable revival took place. He was noted for his skill and success as a medical practitioner; and his death, June 23d. 1790, was sincerely lamented, both by his neighbours and his religious connections. For several years, this church depended, for ministerial supplies, on the visits of neighbouring preachers, or the occasional labours of some of their brethren, who were induced, by the necessity of the case, to endeavour to give a word of exhortation. The cause naturally declined in these circumstances; and they were induced to request Mr. William Curtis, one of their deacons, who had been thus occasionally employed, to accept the pastoral office; to which he was ordained, June 26th. 1797. He continued to preside over them for twenty years; but, being aged, and for a long time infirm, the interest drooped in his hands. In 1816, this declining society was admitted into the New Connection; when the members had sunk to sixteen. In the following year, Mr. Payne, who had left the Academy, was invited to spend a year with them: and, from the spirit for hearing which appeared in the adjacent villages, and the affection which reigned among the members, who then amounted to twenty, the future prospect was encouraging.

In 1816, a small society of general baptists at Misterton were admitted into the New Connection. It was probably an ancient church; but we have not been able to obtain any account of its rise or progress. In 1817, it was in a low state; consisting of only nine members; several of whom had removed to a distance.

The ancient general baptist society in Churchlane, Whitechapel, experienced many discouragements during the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century. In the beginning of that period. the cause appeared to flourish, and the additions were encouraging. But, about 1807, the sparks of discord, which had never been altogether extinguished, blazed forth afresh. Several distressing and irritating circumstances occurred, in quick succession, which had a most unhappy tendency to increase the flame. Dissatisfaction at length rose to such a height, that, in 1811, thirty-one of the members withdrew themselves from fellowship. The remainder endeavoured to support the drooping interest: but, weakened and dispirited by this division, their efforts were languid, and its progress was slow. The advanced age of the minister, also, operated much to prevent a revival. For several years, a considerable degree of unanimity prevailed in the church; but the congregations were small, additions few, and the future prospects discouraging.

Some symptoms of returning prosperity began at length to appear: several members seemed more interested in the welfare of Zion; and meetings for prayer and exhortation were better supported. But new troubles soon arose; and contention had risen to an alarming height, when their venerable pastor, Mr. Dan Taylor, was suddenly called to his reward; expiring, without a sigh, in his chair, Nov, 26th. 1816, in the seventy-eighth year of his age. This awful stroke had a happy effect in hushing, the tumult of discord, and uniting the sincere friends of the cause. Supplies were obtained from the sister churches in the country, as frequently as possible; and, in 1817., they reported, that, although the state of religion was low amongst them, yet they hoped that there was a revival. The number of members was then stated at one hundred and thirty-seven.

Many of the friends, who seceded from Churchlane, in 1811, formed themselves into a distinct society; and, for a few months, assembled in Artillery-street. Finding that place inconvenient, they soon removed to a school-room in Charles-street; where they maintained public worship, and enjoyed the ordinances of the gospel, for a few years. They obtained a supply of ministers, partly from general baptist churches in the country, and partly from other denominations in London. They made several attempts to procure a piece of ground, for a meeting-house, in a proper situation; but were as often disappointed. The obscurity and inconvenience of the place of worship, and the difficulty of obtaining acceptable ministers, prevented their making any rapid progress: and, at length, they became discouraged. In 1814, they gave up the attempt, and dissolved the union; when the number of members had increased from twenty-two to thirty-four. A few returned to their old friends, several of the leading persons amongst them afterwards joined the church in Great Suffolk-street, and some united with other denominations; but it is to be feared that several returned to the world.

The church, which now assembles in Great Suffolk-street, had, in 1800, just opened their small meeting-house in Gravel-lane. For several succeeding years, an encouraging revival took place, and the members increased to thirty-seven.

The obscure situation, and the mean appearance of the little place in which they worshipped rated much to their disadvantage. Several attempts were made, to procure more convenient accommodations: but the term of the lease ran out and nothing, was effected. The cloud, which overspread the prospect, was increased, by a change in the sentiments of the pastor, Mr. J. B. Shenston which induced him to resign his charge, at Lady-day, 1809, and join the particular baptists. Soon after this, they were deprived of their place of worship; and this ancient interest appeared again hastening to ruin. Many of the members forsook the cause; and the rest were scattered and discouraged. In this exigency. Mr. D. Taylor and his friends once more stepped forwards, and, collecting the desponding wanderers, encouraged them to make a fresh attempt to maintain the cause. A room was engaged, belonging to one of the members, in which Mr. Taylor, and the students under his care, supplied them with the regular ministration of the word. But, as this was only a temporary accommodation, he persuaded a few friends to join him in procuring a piece of ground and building a convenient meeting-house, in Great Suffolk-street, Southwark. They exerted themselves to obtain subscriptions, and made themselves responsible for the whole expence. The new building was opened, Oct. 9th. 1809, by the Rev. Dr. Collyer of Peckham, and the Rev. J. Hughes of Battersea.

The students continued, for some time, to supply this destitute people; and, among others, Mr. J. Preston frequently visited them. When he had completed the usual term at the Academy, he was invited to preach on probation; and, in due time, was requested to assume the pastoral office. He was ordained, Feb. 13th. 1811; when Mr. D. Taylor delivered the charge, from Prov. 23:15, 16; and Mr. E. Sexton, of Chesham, addressed the people, from 2 Cor. 13:11.

The cause, at first, appeared to gain ground under Mr. Preston's care; no fewer than twelve persons being added to the church by baptism, in the year following. But symptoms of dissatisfaction soon manifested themselves, and retarded the good work. The heavy debt on the meeting-house, was also a continual clog on their exertions, and checked every attempt to revive or extend the interest. These discouragements induced Mr. Preston to accept an invitation from the church at Melbourn, and leave Southwark, at Christmas 1815. On this event, Mr. J. Heard, and several of the principal seceders from Church-lane, united themselves with the society in Great Suffolk-street, and made a vigorous attempt to raise the cause. The meeting-house was repaired and new galleries erected: respectable ministers were procured from their sister churches; and considerable efforts were used to lessen the debt. In 1817, Mr. J. Farrent, who had been the pastor of a general baptist church at Isleham, in Cambridgeshire, was invited to labour amongst them for a year; and, in a few, months, was requested to take the oversight of this society. The members were thirty-four, and the congregations more numerous than they had been.

We have seen, in the former volume, that a general baptist church had existed at Portsmouth, probably from the time of Cromwell, and that, in 1700, it was in a flourishing state. In the succeeding century, like most other societies of the same denomination, it suffered much from the inroads of doctrines very different from those of its founders; and, towards the close of it, had greatly declined. At that period, Mr. John Kingsford was an assistant preacher in this church and his brother George Kingsford,

who for several years had been pastor of the general baptist church at Ramsgate, settling at Portsmouth on account of business, became also a member of the same society. As both these ministers were desirous of being instrumental in spreading the gospel, they began to look round for some proper scene where they might exert themselves in this noble cause; and soon fixed their attention on Clarence Street, a populous district without the fortifications of Portsea. At that time, there was no place of worship near it, though four were built in a few years afterwards. In conjunction with Mr. Hill, another member of the same church, they opened a subscription towards building a place of worship in this neglected neighbourhood. Their design was liberally encouraged by most of their fellow members: and, a piece of freehold ground being purchased, the building was erected, at an expence of nearly two hundred pounds. It was opened, December 16th. 1798, by Mr. Bogue of Gosport.

Meanwhile, dissatisfaction on account of difference in doctrinal sentiments increased in the church at Portsmouth; and arrangements were, in consequence, made, for the formation of a new interest at Portsea. This was effected, in 1802; a distinct society being formed, consisting of sixteen members. Over this little flock, Mr. J. Kingsford was unanimously chosen pastor; and ordained, Oct. 31st. 1802, by Mr. D. Taylor, of London, and Mr. J. Kingsford, then pastor of the church at, Deal. On the same day, Messrs. James Hill and Joseph Sayer were ordained to the deacons' office.

The blessing of the great Head of the church crowned these attempts with success. The hearers increased and the preaching of the word was rendered effectual to salvation. Many professed their faith in Christ, and gave themselves up to the Lord by baptism. In 1804, these pleasing circumstances made it necessary to unroof the meeting-house, enlarge its dimensions, and erect a gallery in the front. The same encouraging causes continuing to operate, it was found expedient, in 1806, to construct a gallery on one side of the building; and, in 1808, to add a third on the remaining side.

In 1805, this society was cordially admitted into the New Connection; and, at the next annual meeting, they state that their number of members was forty-nine, and that they were well attended with hearers. For several succeeding years, the congregations were encouraging, but few appeared to be properly affected by the word preached. But, in 1810, some symptoms of revival appeared; and, not long afterwards, prayer-meetings, being established, were diligently attended. The friends of religion, sensible of the necessity of divine assistance to enable them successfully to promote its interest, were earnest and united in seeking for this important blessing. The happy results were soon apparent. Their assemblies were crowded with attentive hearers; and the word reached their hearts. In 1812, twelve were added by baptism, and in the year following thirteen. In 1814, the prosperity of the cause induced them to add thirty-two feet to the length of the meeting-house, which increased it to seventy-two feet. Its breadth was thirty-three feet, with galleries all round. These various erections and additions cost nearly two thousand pounds; upwards of twelve hundred of which, had, in 1817, been raised by the zealous exertions of the friends at Portsea, with the generous assistance of sister churches.

The cause continued to prosper: and, though they complain of the ravages made by death, the discouraging effects of the disorderly walk of individuals, and the distress arising from the pressure of the times; yet, in 1817, their number of members was one hundred and six, and the prospect encouraging.

The general baptist church at Downton, in Wiltshire, was founded before the Revolution. Towards the close of the seventeenth century, it declined; and in 1699, the members were only thirteen. At that time, Mr. Benjamin Miller was called to the oversight of this drooping society, and continued to preside over it, with diligence and success, for nearly fifty years. He was removed by death, in 1747, when the members had increased to ninety-four, and the interest was respectable and flourishing. Mr. Miller was a minister of considerable eminence among the general baptists of his day; who raised him to the dignity of a messenger, and, for many years, chose him chairman of the general assembly in London.

For a long time after Mr. Miller's decease, the friends at Downton continued destitute of a pastor. They were occasionally visited by preachers from neighbouring churches; and, at other times, were supplied with the ministration of the word by Mr. Bungey, one of their own members. About this period, several opulent friends enlarged the donations of the society, by generous endowments and bequests. This encouraged them, in 1764, to invite Mr. Brown, of Coventry, to settle with them as their minister. He complied; but his stay was short: as, in less than two years, he left Downton. At length, in 1773, Mr. T. Twining, of Trowbridge, was ordained to the pastoral office among them. He enjoyed, in a high degree, the affections of his people: the cause revived, and many valuable members were added to the church. But this pleasing scene soon vanished. The opposition and avarice of some who had controul over the property of the church, induced Mr. Twining to resign his charge, in 1777.

Soon after his resignation, not only the endowments, but the meeting-house itself was withheld from the church: and a long and painful state of darkness ensued. The depressed people, deprived of the regular means of grace, were in danger of being scattered, and the cause appeared to be hastening towards extinction. But a private member stepped forwards, collected his friends together, and, by his exhortations and example, preserved a laudable degree of order and affection amongst them through all this season of discouragement.

In 1783, Mr. Aldridge, of Lyndhurst, visited this oppressed society: and, pitying their situation, repeated his visits as often as circumstances would permit. These friendly interviews were very acceptable, and tended much to support the hopes of the people. A few years afterwards, Mr. J. Deacon, of Leicester, passing through the town, was informed of the state of their affairs, and advised them to apply for assistance to the Deputies for the protection of the civil rights of Dissenters. They did so; and were directed to lay a plain statement of their concerns before counsel, and request his opinion. A case was accordingly submitted to Mr. Maddocks, who encouraged them to hope for success, in a prudent attempt to recover their rights. In order to this, it was requisite that some person should be legally authorized to claim, as pastor, the emoluments and

accommodations belonging to the church. They therefore requested Mr. Aldridge to accept the office, with which he complied: and, being regularly invested with it, made a formal demand of the meeting-house for public worship, and of the endowments for his support. This demand being refused, a bill was filed in Chancery, under the sanction of the committee, to enforce compliance. The contest was long and doubtful: but, after thirteen years of anxiety and prayer, a judgment was given in favour of the oppressed. The endowments were fully confirmed to the church; and possession of the meeting-house was obtained by an arrangement with the holder.

During this anxious period, the cause of religion had made some progress. Several had joined the church from time to time; and, in 1789, no fewer than eighteen were baptized.- Though affectionately grateful to Mr. Aldridge for the essential services which his friendship had rendered them, yet, as he could visit them but very seldom, it became desirable, on the favourable issue of the contest, to enjoy the privilege of a resident pastor. After some inquiry, they invited Mr. William Smedley, who had then finished his studies at the Academy, to visit them. His labours being acceptable, he was unanimously requested to become their pastor.--He was ordained, April 18th. 1804. Previous to the ordination, Mr. Aldridge solemnly resigned the office which he had assumed for the recovery of their rights; and the connection, that had subsisted nearly seventeen years, was dissolved with striking marks of reciprocal esteem and approbation. The service then proceeded: when Mr. D. Taylor addressed Mr. Smedley, from 1 Tim. 4:12-16; and Mr. J. Kingsford the church, from Rom. 12:4, 5.

In 1803, this church applied for admission into the New Connection, which it obtained the following year. It then consisted of twenty-eight members, the hearers were increasing, four had lately been baptized, and the prospects were encouraging. For several succeeding years, the cause continued to make a gradual, though slow, progress: but disaffection, which had long been silently gathering force, breaking out into dissension, a separation ensued, early in 1816; and Mr. Smedley removed from Downton, at the close of the year. Mr. Mead, a member of the church at Portsea, was invited to supply his place; and ordained to the pastoral office, June 12th. 1816. We have no account of the church at that time: in the preceding year the members amounted to forty-four.

At the close of the seventeenth century, the, general baptist church at Berkhamstead, Chesham and Tring, was in a flourishing state, under the joint superintendence of four elders. All these active pastors, except Mr. Cook, were removed by death before 1712; but, at that time, there were six respectable assistant preachers: Messrs. T. Foster, W. Miller, J. King, J. Woodward, J. Anderson, and J. Widmer; and seven deacons. Towards the close of that year, "considering that they were many in number, and their places of abode far distant one from another, it was thought fit to choose another person to serve them in the capacity of an elder." Mr. Woodward was accordingly nominated to that office, and unanimously chosen. Soon afterwards, Mr. Foster and Mr. Widmer were proposed to the church, as candidates for the same station: the former was then elected; but, there being some difference of opinion with respect to the latter, several years elapsed before he attained that dignity.

The ministers of this society appear to have been highly respected by their sister churches. The general assembly, in 1717, nominated Mr. Cook to the office of Messenger; and, the year following, conferred a similar token of respect on Mr. Foster. The friends at Chesham refused their consent, at first, to Mr. Cook's elevation, though they yielded at length. But Mr. Foster was prevented, by domestic affliction, from accepting the honour. In a few years afterwards, Mr. Widmer was called to the same honourable station.

The cause continued to prosper, and new ministers were called forth, who laboured zealously and successfully in spreading the gospel. In 1723, they appear to have had ten respectable preachers, who were all diligently employed in different parts of this extensive society. A very laudable attention was paid to discipline; and a holy vigilance exercised over the conduct and welfare of the members. Seasons of solemn prayer and fasting were frequently observed, to implore the divine blessing and direction; and days of thanksgiving appointed, when special mercies had been received. Such measures as these doubtless contributed much to the prosperity of vital religion amongst them.

In 1730, Mr. Cook, being indisposed and advanced in years, became incapable of much exertion. Mr. Butler, who had, for some time, been employed as an occasional preacher, was therefore called to assist him in the more active duties of his office; and was ordained, May 17th. 1733, co-pastor with that venerable minister.

For a long season, the friends at Chesham adhered steadily to the doctrines on which the church was founded. So late as 1731, they, by a solemn church act, refused "to exchange in the work of preaching" with a minister whose sole offence appears to have been sitting in the general assembly with those who, as they believed, countenanced the dreadful and dangerous errors of the late Mr. Caffin." Success rewarded their constancy; and, about 1735, it was found necessary to enlarge the meeting-house at Chesham. Probably Mr. Cook was then removed to his reward; and Mr. Butler also appears to have died or to have left these parts, as we hear no more of him. The chief care of this extensive church, therefore, devolved on Mr. Sexton, who had been called to the work of the ministry so early as 1718. In 1744, Messrs. Trustram and Young, were nominated to the office of joint pastors with him; but were not ordained, till July 24th. 1749. In the following year, Mr. Sexton was raised to the dignity of a messenger. About the same period, the meeting-house at Tying was built: and Mr. Young the elder, with Mr. Cock, an assistant preacher, visited the baptized churches, in order to collect money to defray the expence of the erection. There were then a number of valuable theological works which belonged to the church, and were lent to the ministers and others for their perusal. And, in 1753, a baptistery was constructed in Chesham meeting-house.

Thus the cause seems to have proceeded, for a long season, from strength to strength; but, unhappily, the records of the succeeding twenty years are lost. The latter part of this interval was rendered mournfully interesting, by the removal of several valuable ministers. In July, 1762, Mr. Trustram, one of their pastors, died; and, in the ensuing year, Mr. Deely, an assistant preacher. Feb. 8th. 1775, Mr. Sexton, who had served this

society with diligence and success, as minister, elder and messenger, for fifty-seven years, was called to the church above. His funeral sermon was preached by his colleague, Mr. Young; who, in two months, followed him to rest, dying April 13th. following.

This appears to have been the commencement of a time of gloom and declension. Sentiments widely differing from those on which the interest was founded, insinuated themselves among some of the leading persons; and gave rise to disputings and contentions, which, in several instances, led to divisions. For many years, the church declined in zeal, in discipline, in numbers and in a conversation becoming the gospel. During this dark state, Messrs. Caleb Cock and William Thrussell were ordained to the eldership, June 10th. 1775: and, in October, the following year, Mr. Pyall, of Headcorn in Kent, settled among them, "to assist in the work of the ministry."

In 1780, Mr. Cock was removed by death, when the members had decreased to one hundred and twelve. In that year, Mr. Edward Sexton, the grandson of their former elder of that name, was called to the work of the ministry; and laboured with so much acceptance and success, that he was ordained to the pastoral office, Sept. 14th. 1784. He presided, in conjunction with Mr. Thrussell, till 1796, when the latter removed from the church. Several young men were, about this time, brought forwards in the sacred work: amongst whom, Mr. Seabrook Young was so well approved, that his brethren invited him to become joint pastor with Mr. Sexton. He was ordained, April 11th. 1799; when Mr. D. Taylor gave the charge, from 1 Cor. 4:2; and Mr. Hobbs. of Chatham, addressed the people, from 1 Thess. 5:12, 13. This union, which promised to be an important benefit to the cause, was of short duration: Mr. Young being snatched away by death, Feb. 10th. 1800; ten months after his ordination.

A short time previous to this afflicting event, the ministers of this society had extended their labours to Ashley-Green and Hawridge, villages within a few miles of Chesham. At both of these places, preaching was established, which was well attended, and continued, with encouraging success, to the close of our present period. Some time afterwards, the gospel was introduced at Friczden, a place two miles from Berkhamstead. Early in 1602, Mr. Joseph Hobbs, removed from Chatham to this people; and, settling at Berkhamstead, became their regular preacher. His services being acceptable, he was ordained co-pastor with Mr. Sexton, Dec. 2nd. 1802. On this occasion, Mr. D. Taylor, addressed the pastor, from Acts 20:28; the church, from 1 Thess. 5:13; and four deacons who were ordained at the same time, from 1 Pet, 4:11.

These active and zealous colleagues prosecuted their sacred work with cordiality and success. The great Head of the church blest their endeavours to the re-establishment of their charge in their original principles of faith, and the revival of that regard to the discipline of the New Testament, which had distinguished their best days. The happy result was a pleasing increase in numbers and in graces. And being now decidedly of the same sentiments as those on which the New Connection was formed, they naturally sought an union with that body. In 1809, this union was effected. The number of members then was one hundred and fifty: they were peaceful and making vigorous exertions for the spread of the gospel. In the following year, agreeably to the advice of

the Association, they invited Mr. John Ewen, who was then leaving the Academy, to preach among them. His labours being approved, he settled at Tring, in 1810; and became a regular assistant minister in this increasing church.

The cause continued to revive: peace reigned in their councils, the congregations improved at the three stations, and additions were frequent. In 1817, the members had risen to two hundred and twenty-two: of whom, one hundred and sixty resided at Chesham and its neighbourhood; forty, at Berkhamstead; and the remainder, at Tring.

Many young men were, from time to time, called to the ministry by this society, who became useful pastors of other churches. Among these may be mentioned, Mr. Hobbs, who, in 1705, was chosen pastor by the society at High Wycomb, and afterwards raised to the messenger's office. Mr. Birch, who, in 1721, was settled over a church in Northamptonshire: Mr. Young, who, in 1753, removed to Yarmouth;* Mr. James Drowley, who settled at Lewes; Mr. J. Kingsford, who removed to Portsmouth and became pastor of the society at Portsea; and Mr. J. Sexton, pastor of Ford church: besides Mr. Payne, who, in 1816, went to labour at Morcott; and Mr. Darvill, who was then chiefly employed at Wendover.

[* This Mr. William Young afterwards settled at Bourn. Though unsuccessful as a pastor, he seems to have been a man of considerable attainments in classical learning. He kept a school at Bourn; and was in habits of intimacy with several dignitaries of the church of England, with whom he maintained a literary correspondence. And so highly did one of them esteem his abilities for composition, that he occasionally employed him to write his sermons, when he was called to preach on particular occasions; and shared the emoluments with his dissenting friend.]

The general baptist church at Ipswich, in Suffolk, owes its rise to the labours of Mr. W. Jackson, who was originally a member of the society at Deal, in Kent. Removing to Ipswich on account of business, and not finding a church of his own denomination within less than forty miles, he united himself with a few methodists. By their persuasion, he was induced to go into the adjacent villages, to preach the gospel; and was made the instrument of awakening in many an attention to the concerns of eternity. But some of these converts being afterwards baptized by immersion, his associates became jealous of his influence, and wished him to conceal his sentiments on that subject. This he refused to promise, and an amicable separation ensued.

About this time, the Derby militia lay at Ipswich; among whom were several members of the general baptist churches in the midland counties. These men, hearing of this rupture, sought out Mr. Jackson, and encouraged him to procure a suitable place for public worship. A room was accordingly hired and licensed; which was opened June 18th. 1809. At first, there were but eight attended but the room was soon filled with serious hearers. In a short time, seven persons proposed themselves for baptism. The pastor of the church at Norwich, being invited, visited them; and, Aug. 3d. 1809, baptized the candidates, and formed them into a church state.--They immediately chose Mr. Jackson for their minister, and went on their way rejoicing.

Being obliged to leave two rooms in succession, they wished for a more certain place of worship. They therefore engaged the owner of a house which had been burnt down to rebuild it; and agreed to pay him a yearly rent of twenty-five pounds. This place, which would accommodate three hundred people, they furnished with a pulpit and pews, to the amount of nearly fifty pounds. It was opened, April 22d. 1810. The expence of fitting it up being too heavy for the members of this infant society, who were all poor, the minister applied to the churches in Kent; and, by their liberality, discharged the debt. In this house the cause continued to advance: many being added to their number, and the hearers increasing. But the rent proved a great clog to their exertions and, being obliged to give a year's notice before they left it, they determined, at Christmas 1811, to inform the owner that they would quit it at the termination of the year, and, to trust to divine Providence for their future accommodation. A few days after they had given this intimation, a builder voluntarily proposed to erect a meeting-house for them on very reasonable terms. They accepted his offer; and the new building was opened, May 27th. 1812, by Mr. D. Taylor, of London, and Mr. J. Preston, of Great Suffolk-street. On the following day, Mr. Jackson was ordained to the pastoral office; when Mr. D. Taylor addressed the minister, from Acts 20:24; and Mr. Preston the people, from 1 Thess. 1:12, 13. In the evening, several brethren were ordained to the deacon's office; to whom Mr. Taylor delivered a charge, from 1 Pet. 4:11.--The friends at Ipswich. made very laudable exertions to assist in defraying the expences of this building: but, when they had done their utmost, a debt of upwards of four hundred pounds remained; which was long a heavy burden on the cause, and tended greatly to prevent its progress.

In 1813, this society was placed on the list of churches forming the New Connection. It then consisted of fifty-three members; twenty-three of whom had been added in the year preceding. For a time, the cause prospered; the congregations were large; and, in the space of three years, fifty-four persons were baptized on a profession of faith. But it could not reasonably be expected that this prosperity should continue without interruption. Such a rapid increase of members must, almost unavoidably, introduce some improper characters; and, especially when all the members of the church, and even the officers, were little acquainted with the order and duties of church-fellowship, most produce a degree of anarchy inconsistent with the real welfare of the cause. This was the case at Ipswich. In 1816, they complain of irregularities which caused difficulties. These difficulties increased in the following year; and they were under the painful necessity of excluding many on account of their disorderly conduct. This caused dissatisfaction in others, and they withdrew from communion. In June 1817, however, the storm appears to have, in some degree, subsided, and the congregation had begun to improve. The number of members then was forty-six.

In 1813, a small society of general baptists at Chatham in Kent was admitted into the New Connection. They had separated from the ancient church of that denomination, which we have already noticed. For more than half of the eighteenth century, that society had been under the care of Mr. Neale. He died about 1792, and was succeeded by Mr. Joseph Hobbs, who had, for some time, assisted them in the ministry. About 1800, dissensions arose respecting points of faith; and a separation ensued. Mr. Hobbs and his

friends withdrew, and formed themselves into a distinct society, at the house of one of their members. In the spring of 1802, Mr. Hobbs removed to Berkhamstead and, after his departure, they were supplied with preaching by Mr. S. Garrett, who continued to labour amongst them to the close of our present period. Their number appears never to have exceeded seventeen: and, in 1817, it had sunk to twelve.

Wrotham is a market-town in Kent, twenty-four miles south-east of London. At this place, Mr. G. Purcell, who then served the ancient general baptist church at Bessell's Green, commenced preaching, May, 1815, on the Lord's-day evenings. The auditors were attentive; and, considering circumstances, numerous. In the, ensuing year, Mr. Purcell, finding it necessary, on account of difference of sentiments, to separate from the friends at Bessell's Green, he was enabled, by the liberal assistance of a pious individual, to remove to Wrotham, and make an attempt there to found an interest. A room was hired, and regular service established. In a few months, three persons were baptized; who, with the minister and his wife, formed themselves into a church state. In 1817, this small society was placed on the list of the New Connection; and it was hoped that, under the divine blessing, this weak attempt might be crowned with ultimate success.

SECT. 5.--A List of the Churches which composed the New Connection of General Baptists, A.D. 1817, with a Scheme of their Origin.

Having thus glanced at the proceedings of the various churches which composed the New Connection, we shall present the reader with a use of them and the number of members in each, in the order of the respective districts; assuming, as our authority, the Returns made to the annual Association at Castle. Donington, June, 1817, and published in the Minutes of that assembly.

I. THE MIDLAND DISTRICT

- 1 Barton -- 312 members
- 2 Hugglescote -- 157
- 3 Melbourn -- 227
- 4 Packington and Ashby -- 127
- 5 Cauldwell -- 66
- 6 Kegworth -- 987
- 7 Sutton Donington -- 65
- 8 Long-Whatton and Belton -- 77
- 9 Ilkiston and Smalley -- 171
- 10 Castle-Donington -- 245
- 11 Loughborough -- 252
- 12 Rothley -- 72
- 13 Wodhouse-Eaves -- 56
- 14 Quorndon -- 149
- 15 Leake & Wimeswould -- 192
- 16 Broughton -- 73
- 17 Friar-lane, Leicester -- 185
- 18 Archdeacon-lane -- 89

- 19 Hinckley -- 106
- 20 Thurlaston, &c. -- 111
- 21 Wolvey -- 99
- 22 Longford -- 108
- 23 Birmingham -- 201
- 24 Sutton Coldfield -- 47
- 25 Nottingham -- 436
- 26 Kirkby-Woodhouse -- 47
- 27 Gamston and Retford -- 87
- 28 Derby -- 154
- 29 Duffield -- 203
- 30 Ashford -- 16
- 31 Abney and Bradwell -- 9
- 32 Austrey -- 131
- 33 Beeston -- 106
- 34 Nantwich -- 10
- 35 Knipton -- 11

Total in the Midland District, 4494

II. THE NORTHERN DISTRICT.

- 36 Birchcliff -- 199
- 37 Heptonstall-Slack -- 177
- 38 Shore -- 36
- 39 Queenshead -- 142
- 40 Halifax -- 71
- 41 Burnley -- 25
- 42 Lidgate -- 11
- 43 Stayley-Bridge -- 80

In the Northern District, 741

III. THE LINCOLNSHIRE DISTRICT.

- 44 Boston -- 93
- 45 Maltby -- 8
- 46 Fleet -- 130
- 47 Killingholm -- 30
- 48 Gosberton -- 22
- 49 Sutterton -- 26
- 50 Tydd St. Giles -- 65
- 51 Wisbeach -- 104
- 52 St. Ives -- 27
- 53 Kirton -- 31
- 54 Louth -- 80

55 Spalding -- 62
56 Bourn -- 54
57 Peterborough -- 34
58 March -- 91
59 Forncett St. Peter
60 Epworth & Butterwick -- 50
61 Morcott -- 20
62 Misterton -- 9

Total in the Lincolnshire District, 1005

IV. THE LONDON DISTRICT.

63 Church Lane -- 137
64 Great Suffolk Street -- 34
65 Portsea -- 106
66 Downton -- 44
67 Berkhamstead, &c. -- 222
68 Ipswich -- 46
69 Chatham -- 12
70 Wrotham -- 5
Total in the London District, 606

ABSTRACT

Midland District, 35 churches, 4494 members
Northern District, 8 churches, 741 members
Lincolnshire District, 19 churches, 1005 members
London District, 8 churches, 606 members

Total The New Connection, 70 churches, 6846 members

The number of Members in these churches has been corrected by subsequent information: the result will therefore differ a little from the result in the Minutes.

Perhaps the following, Scheme of the Origin of these societies may not be uninteresting to the attentive reader.

In the Midland District,

BARTON the parent society, formed in 1745, was divided, in 1760, into the Churches of BARTON, MELBOURN, KEGWORTH, LOUGHBOROUGH, and KIRKBY-WOODHOUSE.

From BARTON Church were formed, Hinckley Church, in 1766; Hugglescote Church, in 1798.

From Hinckley Church arose Longford Church, in 1773; Thurlaston Church, in 1794; Wolvey Church, in 1815.

FROM MELBOURN church were formed, Cauldwell church, in 1785; Ashby and Packington, in 1807.

From Ashby and Packington church, arose Austrey church, in 1808.

From KEGWORTH church were formed, Ilkiston and Smalley church, in 1785 Castle-Donington church, in 1785; Sutton Bonington church, in 1798; Longwhatton and Belton, in 1799.

From LOUGHBOROUGH church arose, Leake and Wimeswould church, in 1782; Quorndon church, in 1804 Rothley church, in 1802.

From Leake church was formed, Broughton church, in 1806.

From Rothley church sprung, Woodhouse Eaves church, in 1808.

The following churches were not formed from any single church: but were raised by the united efforts of several societies.

Sutton Coldfield church, in 1775; Birmingham church, in 1786 Nottingham church, in 1775; Beeston church, in 1804; Derby church, in 1791; from which was formed, Duffield church, in 1810.

Besides these original churches, a few others in the midland counties joined the New Connection, which, though founded long before the commencement of that union, had declined and were almost extinct. These were,

Friar-lane church, Leicester, from which arose,
Archdeacon-lane church, in 1794.

Ashford church, from which was formed,
Bradwell and Abney church, in 1811.
Gamston and Retford church.

Natwich church;
Knipton church.

In the Northern District.

From Birchcliff, the parent church, formed 1763, arose,
Queenshead church, in 1773;
Burnley church, in 1780;
Shore church, in 1795;
Heptonstall Slack church, in 1807.

From Queenshead church was formed,
Halifax church, in 1782.

Lidgate church was founded by the joint exertions of the Yorkshire ministers, in 1816.

Stayley Bridge church was formed independently of all others, in 1808.

In the Lincolnshire and London Districts, the churches had generally existed long before they joined the New Connection, except Sutterton church, which was separated from Gosberton, in 1808;

Tydd St. Giles' church, from Long Sutton in 1788;

Louth church, formed in 1802;

Fornsett St. Peter's church, in 1814;

Portsea church, in 1802;

Ipswich church, in 1809;

Wrotham church, in 1816.

***SECT. 6.—The Transactions of the New Connection as a body,
from A.D. 1800 to A.D. 1817.***

The transactions of the New Connection as a body, during the first seventeen years of the nineteenth century, though numerous and important, considered chiefly in the prosecution of plans previously formed; and therefore will not demand a long detail in this brief sketch of the proceedings of that period.

The Academy, for the instruction of young men preparing for the ministry, was continued, with satisfaction and success, for many years, under its first tutor, Mr. Dan Taylor. A considerable number of the pupils who had enjoyed the advantage of his instructions, became useful and acceptable ministers of the gospel, and respectable pastors of churches. But, in 1812, various circumstances united to introduce a degree of embarrassment into the concerns of this institution; which induced the subscribers and supporters, who had till then conducted the undertaking by a committee chosen annually from themselves, to resign the management of it into the hands of the annual Association. This was done at the Association at Birmingham, June 1813; and the charge was accepted by that assembly. On this occasion, the funds of the institution were declared to be designed "to support an Academy for such young men of approved ministerial abilities as could devote their whole time to preparatory studies; and, by pecuniary grants, to assist those young preachers in the pursuit of knowledge, who could not leave their stations." It was also resolved, "that the design of the Association, by the maintenance of this institution, was to promote and cherish the sentiments contained in the Articles, drawn up and signed, in the year 1770, at the formation of the New Connection." Having thus defined their object, they appointed a committee to prepare a plan for the effectual accomplishment of it. On the recommendation of this committee, various principles and regulations were adopted for the future management of the institution. Mr. D. Taylor being in his seventy-fifth year, the Association felt itself obliged, though very reluctantly,

to look out for a younger man to superintend the Academy. They, therefore, after expressing their deep and grateful sense of the valuable services of, the former Tutor, of his firm attachment to the principles of the Connection, and of his long and valuable labours to promote its interest, chose Mr. J. Jarrom for his successor. Mr. Jarrom accepted the appointment; and the Academy was accordingly transferred to Wisbeach. In 1817, it consisted of five students.

In 1802, after the failure of the General Baptist Magazine, Mr. Adam Taylor, at the request of the Association at London, undertook to publish a periodical miscellany, under the title of "The General Baptist Repository." It was designed to serve as a register of the transactions of the New Connection, as a medium of communication and appeal on subjects of general interest, and as a repository of original communications. At first, a number appeared every six months; but, in 1810, it began to be published every three months: and. continued to be supported to the close of the period now under review.

In 1814, a writer in the General Baptist Repository proposed a plan, by which he supposed the debts and incumbrances which depressed and shackled many churches, might easily be removed. His proposal was, for each member of the Connection to subscribe one penny monthly, for this express purpose. By this means, he calculated, that he should raise, annually, two hundred pounds, towards the accomplishment of his design. This paper attracted attention; and the subject was brought forwards, at the ensuing Association, at Leicester. The result was, an attempt to establish "a Fund for religious purposes." A list of objects to which relief should be afforded was drawn up, and approved. But, though the plan was resumed the following year, and officers chosen, nothing permanent was effected. Probably in attempt to accomplish too much prevented the success of the scheme.

Considerable difficulty had often been experienced, in the efforts made by the ministers of the New Connection, to spread the gospel, through the want of pecuniary means: and many opportunities of doing good had been lost, because the expence of improving them would have fallen on individuals, unable to bear it. By these means, the energies of the friends of religion were cramped, and their exertions checked. At the Association in London, June, 1810, a proposal was made, that a minister should be requested to visit certain ancient general baptist churches in Lincolnshire, which had fallen into decay. The visit was unanimously allowed to be desirable, and likely to produce much good; but the usual previous question, "Who will defray the expences of the journey?" had nearly quashed the motion. A worthy private member of the Association, observing this, stepped forwards, and suggested the propriety of raising a fund, expressly devoted to meet the expences of attempts that might be made to spread the gospel, or to revive it where it had decayed. The hint was unanimously approved; and fifteen pounds were immediately subscribed, towards carrying it into effect. This was afterwards denominated "the Itinerant Fund;" and met with considerable support. Its utility was eminently manifest in the number and the success of the attempts made, in following years, under its patronage. In the year, ending June 24th. 1817, upwards of seventy-one pounds had been paid from it, for the supplying of destitute churches, and the formation an encouragement of new interests. Mr. J. Heard of London, was chosen Treasurer.

As the Connection increased, it became more necessary to have some mode of admitting and dismissing churches, that might secure the primary objects of the union. In 1802, the church at Castle-Donington sent a case to the Association at London, "requesting that assembly to endeavour to form some rule, by which churches might be received into the Connection, and, when necessity required it, excluded from it." After due deliberation, it was however replied, that "the diversity of circumstances in those cases was so great, that no invariable rule could be laid down." In this unsettled state it remained till 1815; when Mr. James Taylor presented a case to the Association at Nottingham, inquiring, "Would it not be advisable to form some rule for our Association and Connection; especially for the admission and exclusion of churches and individuals?" After some discussion, the subject was referred to the following Association at Boston, in 1816. It was then considered at great length, and occasioned some warmth. At length, it was resolved, by a large majority, "That the Connection continue to adhere to the religious principles on which it was established, in 1770: and that all churches which may hereafter be admitted into it, satisfy it that they maintain the same; and if any church in the connection depart from these principles either in doctrine or practice, and by proper steps cannot be reclaimed, it shall be excluded from the Connection." A committee was then pointed to devise the best means of carrying this resolution into effect: and, on their recommendation, two rules were adopted: one prescribing the mode of procedure in the admission of churches; and the other, the steps to be pursued when exclusion became necessary.--This resolution and the rules founded on it, produced a considerable sensation in some parts of the Connection; but, at the succeeding association, in 1817, they were confirmed, with very little opposition.

The Circular Letters, annexed to the Minutes of the annual Associations, in this period, were on important subjects, and from various pens. Mr. D. Taylor drew up the epistle for 1801, on "The concurrence of people with their ministers in promoting the interest of Christ." In 1802, no letter having been prepared, the same minister was requested to write "an Address to the Connection, founded on a view of the state of the churches." The Letter, for 1805, on the Atonement of Christ; and, for 1809, "on Covetousness,"* were also by the same author. Mr. W. Felkin addressed the churches, in 1803, on "the Nature and Objects of saving faith:" and, in 1808, on "Spiritual Mindedness." [* After this Letter had been read to the Association, approved and ordered to be printed, it was, by some mistake, lost before publication; and therefore never appeared.] M. J. Freeston wrote the circular, for 1804, on "the Doubts and Fears of Christians, their Source and Cure;" and, for 1806, on "Private Prayer." Mr. W. Pickering, in 1807, recommended "a conscientious attendance on Meetings for prayers, exhortation and church business:" and, in 1816, animated his brethren to "Christian Zeal," In 1810, Mr. John Taylor wrote a long letter on the important subject of "the religious Education of Children." Mr. J. Jarrom, in 1811, explained the Importance and Influence of religious Principle." Mr. R. Smith, in 1812, wrote the circular on "Perseverance:" and, in 1813, Mr. T. Stevenson exhorted his brethren to "Public Spirit in promoting religion." In the following year, the death of Mr. Burges, who had been requested to write the circular letter, disappointed the expectation of his friends but, in 1815, Mr. Bissill took up the subject, "Directions and Encouragements to Christians in times of temporal Distress." In 1817, Mr. J. Pike was

required to state and inforce the "Scriptural Motives for vigorous Exertion in spreading the Gospel among the Heathen."

SECT. 7.--Miscellaneous Notices--Conference--Aged Ministers' Fund--Derby Religious Tract Society--Sunday Schools--Friendly Societies--Religious Benefit Societies--General Baptist Missionary Society.

Besides the annual Association, of which we have already given a sufficient account, a Conference of the ministers and representatives of the churches is established in each district of the New Connection, which claims some notice in a work of this nature.

The Midland, or, as it was originally denominated, the Leicestershire Conference, took its rise from the weekly meetings of the first ministers, mentioned in a former part of this history. After the division of the original body into distinct churches, it was found expedient to continue regular meetings of the officers and brethren of the various societies, to consult for the general good. These meetings were supported by all the general baptist churches in the counties of Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Warwick; and held, every two or three months, at each place in rotation. At each Conference, there were generally two sermons, preached by ministers previously appointed by the church at which it was held. For a long series of years, this Conference was maintained with great harmony and advantage; but, at length, the extension of the cause and the number of churches, suggested the propriety of forming them into two classes. This division was effected in 1803; and two Conferences formed: the one, under the denomination of the Nottinghamshire Conference, including the churches at Derby, Kegworth, Melbourn, Donington, Leake, Broughton, Sutton Bonington, Ilkiston, Nottingham, Kirkby-Woodhouse, Ashford and Long-Whatton; the other, which retained the name of the Leicestershire Conference, comprehending the societies at Loughborough, Quorndon, Rothley, Leicester, Hinckley, Longford, Birmingham, Cauldwell, Barton, Hugglescote and Packington. In order to cultivate mutual acquaintance and affection between the two districts, an union Conference, including both, was annually held alternately at Kegworth and Loughborough. This plan was pursued till 1810; when, supposing that acting separately tended to weaken their strength, they reunited, and formed what has since been called the Midland Conference. In 1813, the churches composing this Conference were ranged in four districts; in each of which the meeting was proposed to be held once every year. This plan being found convenient, was confirmed in 1817.

The continued spread of the cause so enlarged the extent of this district, that the Conference became difficult of access to those churches which were situated at its limits. This induced the friends at Birmingham, Austrey, Longford, Wolvey, and adjacent places, to establish a separate meeting, under the name of the Warwickshire Conference. It assembled, for the first, time, at Sutton-Coldfield, Sept. 27th. 1816. The meetings were held every three months, and promised to be very useful in the promotion of the cause of Christ in those parts.

The Yorkshire Conference was begun, in 1772, by Messrs. Dan and John Taylor, when there were no other general baptist ministers in the northern district. At its commencement, it was confined to ministers; soon afterwards the officers of the church were admitted; and ultimately it was opened to the ministers, the officers, and as many of

the private members of any of the churches as chose to attend. The meetings were held every two months; and the professed design was to consult together on the best means of promoting the mutual benefit of the ministers, the good of the respective churches, and the glory of God. At each meetings, three enquiries were made: "1. What have we heard or known of each other as preachers and of our preaching since the last meeting? 2. What difficulties have we to mention? 3. What more can be done to promote religion among us?" Under one or other of these questions, the whole business was disposed: and much useful discussion often took place. A sermon was preached at each conference.

The first meeting of the Lincolnshire Conference was held at Gosberton, June 23rd. 1781. As Mr. Burgess, who had been labouring in the ministry at Halifax in Yorkshire, had seen the advantages resulting from the conferences in the northern district, he endeavoured, soon after his settlement at Fleet, to establish similar meetings in Lincolnshire. His endeavours were successful and the principles and regulations of the Yorkshire conference were adopted, with little variation, by the new conference. It was held every three months, and a discourse delivered at each meeting. In 1815, several regulations for conducting these meetings were adopted, a scheme for the rotation of the conferences was fixed, and it was agreed to have two public services at each conference.

The London Conference owes its existence to Mr. D. Taylor, who invited a few friends to meet him at Chatham, Sept. 11th. 1799; when it was determined to hold a conference twice in the year, to consult on the most proper methods of promoting the interest of the Lord Jesus Christ. At each of these meeting, two sermons were preached, the state of the churches connected with it reported, and the question, "What steps can we take more effectually to promote the religion of Jesus?" proposed to each one present.

All these Conferences existed in full vigour at the period when this work concludes. They had contributed essentially to the prosperity if the New Connection. By these interviews, the bonds of friendship among ministers were cemented, and their drooping spirits cheered; they were animated to activity and faithfulness in the cause of their common Master; and instructed in the best means of supporting it. The people had the opportunity of obtaining the advice of judicious and disinterested friends, in difficult or delicate cases; and of having their faith, hope, and obedience strengthened, by hearing the same sacred truths enforced and motives urged by the ministers of other churches, which their own preachers were daily labouring to impress on their minds,

In 1808, a Fund was established at Loughborough, chiefly supported by the general baptist churches in Lincolnshire, under the designation of "The Aged Ministers' Fund," of which Mr. Jarvis Miller was chosen Treasurer. Its object was to furnish assistance to aged and decayed ministers--to aid indigent churches in supporting their ministers--and to assist destitute congregations in obtaining proper supplies. For some years, it was little known, except in its immediate vicinity; but, towards the close of the present period, in consequence of repeated appeals in the General Baptist Repository, it obtained increased patronage. Previous to April 30th. 1817, this laudable institution, had advanced upwards of two hundred and forty pounds, towards the accomplishment of its benevolent purposes.

A society was formed at Derby, Sept. 1810, denominated "The Derby General Baptist Religious Tract Society:" the object of which was the gratuitous distribution of religious tracts. Though it did not receive that extensive encouragement, which, from its obvious utility, might have been expected; yet, besides purchasing a considerable quantity of tracts from other societies, it printed large editions of several valuable original pieces. As it was only in its infancy at the close of our account, it may be hoped, that it would, in future years, become better known and more justly appreciated, by the denomination to which it was devoted.

The churches of the New Connection early and zealously countenanced those useful institutions, Sunday Schools. In 1808, a scheme was proposed to secure the co-operation of the teachers and friends of the rising generation in the midland district; and, for several years, an annual meeting of the delegates from the various institutions was held at Loughborough. In 1811, this assembly was attended by the representatives of thirty-seven general baptist sunday schools, in which three thousand seven hundred children were instructed, by five hundred and eighty five gratuitous teachers and fifty assistants. The object continued to be pursued by the churches with increasing assiduity, and the happy effects were highly encouraging. Nor were these exertions confined to the midland counties: in 1815, eight flourishing general baptist schools were united to the South Lincolnshire and Isle-of-Ely Sunday School Union. In the northern district, the same object was pursued with equal alacrity and success. In short, it appears from the accounts which have reached us, that, in 1817, there were very few churches in the New Connection which did not support a Sunday school; and it is probable, that more than seven thousand children then received instruction under their patronage.

In many of these churches, Friendly Societies were formed, with a design, under the divine blessing, of administering religious instruction and consolation to the ignorant and afflicted, when lying on the bed of sickness or approaching the hour of dissolution; and to alleviate their temporal necessities, by pecuniary assistance. These societies were chiefly supported by subscriptions of a penny weekly; and, in many instances, were rendered highly beneficial to the present and eternal welfare of the objects. One of these institutions, though not peculiarly noted either for its numbers or zeal, in the two years previous to Oct. 1817, paid three hundred and twenty-seven visits, to eighty objects, and distributed amongst them upwards of thirty-three pounds.

Religious Benefit Societies were also instituted in several of the congregations, to provide funds for the support of the members in times of sickness and expence. The most noted of these was the Christian Fund, which was established, in 1773, by a few members of the church at Fleet. After encountering various difficulties and reverses, it obtained considerable countenance among the churches in the Lincolnshire district. In 1817, it consisted of upwards of two hundred and fifty members: and had distributed, during the preceeding seventeen years, more than two thousand two hundred pounds. These sums were raised by subscriptions of one shilling monthly from all the members, and the benevolent assistance of the more affluent, who, as honorary members, subscribed for the benefit of others. These generous friends composed, at least, one fifth of the number of

subscribers. An annual general meeting of the friends and supporters of the institution was held, in January, at Fleet: when a sermon was preached, and the business of the society transacted. Similar institutions were established at March and Tydd St. Giles'; and the result was equally satisfactory.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, considerable attention was excited, in various parts of the union, to the subject of foreign missions. Many respectable friends, indeed, feared that the Connection did not possess sufficient strength to attempt a separate mission; and, therefore, recommended it to the churches to lend what assistance they could to the particular baptist society. Some local circumstances, however, roused the zeal of the friends at Nottingham, and they commenced a subscription to support a general baptist mission. They also recommended the subject to the midland conference, and that meeting proposed it to the churches and the annual Association at Boston, in 1816. The Association expressed its hearty approbation of the design, and advised the friends of the object immediately to form themselves into a society for the prosecution of it. This was accordingly done: and a new institution was formed, under the title of "The General Baptist Missionary Society." A treasurer, secretary, and committee were chosen to manage the concerns of the infant society, and measures adopted to forward its object. But the progress and success of this attempt must necessarily be left to the historian of future years.

SECT. 8--A brief sketch of the Discipline and Faith of the New Connection of General Baptists.

The churches composing the New Connection of General Baptists were, in their discipline, strictly congregational. They considered that a church of Christ was a society of faithful men voluntarily associated to support the interests of religion and enjoy its privileges, according to their own views of those sacred subjects. They believed, that each society was competent to manage its own concerns; and allowed of no foreign controul, not even from their own conferences or association. The executive power of a church, they conceived, to be lodged in the members regularly assembled. The laws by which they are to proceed, they maintained to be the precepts of Christ, in the New Testament: of the intent and application of which, every church and each individual had a right to form his own judgment. And, while they disclaimed all external authority, they were equally jealous of undue internal influence: holding their rights as church members sacred against the encroachment of their own officers. It may, therefore, be supposed, that their modes of proceeding in matters of discipline were diversified; and that the same society did not, at all times, preserve a consistency in its decisions. Whatever case occurred, or question arose, it became a subject of discussion, at their church-meetings; and was determined, according to the judgment or the will of a majority of those who happened to be present. This mode of proceeding doubtless had its inconveniences; but they esteemed it to be the appointment of the great Head of the church, and therefore most to his glory and their own edification. This, however, renders it impracticable to detail their system of discipline; as no such system, as applied to them as a Connection, ever existed.

The doctrinal sentiments of the New Connection, on some important subjects, were stated in the six articles adopted at its formation. But, as these were intended to declare their views only on a few disputed points, the reader may be desirous of seeing a more comprehensive account of their faith; and we are happy in being able to gratify him. When Mr. Dan Taylor removed to London, he read a "Confession of his Faith" to the society in Church-lane, which, by their direction, was entered in their records. As Mr. Taylor was then confessedly at the head of the Connection; and as that church "thoroughly approved of this Confession," it may be presumed to speak the general sentiments of the body; and will form an appropriate conclusion of this History.

MR. DAN TAYLOR'S CONFESSION OF FAITH, read and approved, at a special Church-meeting, of the General Baptist Society, in Church-lane, Whitechapel, June 1st. 1785.

1. I believe that the whole creation gives proofs of a Deity; and that man is capable of forming such reasonings and arguments from the evidence of wisdom and power presented to our view in the several objects that our eyes daily behold, as are sufficient to manifest the workmanship of One, who is infinitely superior to mere mortals. But, however evident this may be, and how certainly soever all nations of the world have experienced the truth of it; yet the most sagacious mortal never was, nor ever will be, able to conceive clearly of God, nor of those things which are necessary to give comfort and satisfaction, respecting future happiness or the way to enjoy that happiness, by the light of nature. Therefore, as far as we can judge, there is an apparent necessity of a fuller discovery of the mind of God to man than the light of nature, in order to understand how we can be accepted with him.

2. That the great God has therefore been pleased, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to make himself known and to reveal his will to man, by voices, visions, &c. by the ministry of the prophets and of his own Son; and afterwards by his apostles: and has given such full evidence, by miracles, prophecies and otherwise, that they all received their mission from heaven, that there is no just reason to doubt of it.

3. That these instructions are since collected, by divine appointment, into one book, called the Bible, and preserved, by divine Providence, for the illumination of a dark world, in spite of many efforts that have been made use of to destroy them.

4. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are given by inspiration of God, as a full and sufficient revelation of his will to mortals: and, that we may learn from thence, whatever is needful to be known in order to enjoy present and everlasting felicity. That there is no other book in existence that can lay a just claim to divine inspiration besides the Scriptures. And that nothing is to be added to them by the invention or tradition of men, or from any opinion or authority whatever; and, that nothing can with impunity be substituted in the stead of any part of them. That we have no authority to expect nor can we with safety depend upon, any other revelation or suggestion whatever besides the scriptures: they are our only rule in every branch of practice and faith; and are

sufficiently plain to every one who reads them with attention and is willing to follow them: so that all others are without excuse.

5. That the Scriptures give us a clear and sufficient account of the Blessed God, and teach us, that he is infinitely wise, powerful and holy that he is eternal and immutable; that he knows all things; that he is good, kind and pitiful to all men, and is not willing that any should perish; that he is invariably faithful to all his promises and threatnings. That God is one; yet there are Three represented by the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who have communion in one Godhead, and have proper Deity ascribed to them all. But I cannot find, that any man has yet learned from scripture to describe how these three are united in one Godhead; nor the exact modes of their distinction. Nor do I pretend to be able to give an exact account of this mystery.--As I do not find them called in Scripture, three Persons, I do not chuse to call them so myself; but, I neither wish to condemn nor to contend with those who think it proper to use this manner of speech.

6. That the great God formed all things by his powerful word; and preserves, supports, supplies and controuls the whole creation; and even overrules the wickedness of men and devils by the same power for his own glory and according to the counsel of His own will.

7. That the great God, for his own praise and glory, formed and continually supports two classes of intelligent beings; i.e. Angels and Men; who are the principal subjects of his kingdom, and are under the most indispensable obligations to do his will, and consecrate themselves to serve his Interest and promote his glory and, that he justly demands this of them. That some of the Angels rebelled against him, and are consigned to everlasting woe, hopeless; while others continued in obedience and kept their first estate, and so continue happy in his presence. That these fallen angels or one of these, by a stratagem led our first parents into rebellion against their Maker; and hereby this world of ours, which would otherwise have been a place of felicity, is become a region of iniquity, misery and death.

8. That, in consequence of this first sin, all mankind lost their primitive rectitude, and are all prone to rebel against God; and, when they come to understanding, do actually rebel against God, and are, in consequence of that rebellion, exposed to his wrath as the just punishment of it. That in consequence of this revolt from God and rebellion against him, mankind can never be happy, till their sins be pardoned and their hearts purified.

9. That the moral law requires all men to love God, with all their heart, with all their mind, with all their soul, and with all their strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves: and, that this is the test of right and wrong, and the only rule of every man's conduct. That all men are transgressors of it both in temper and life, and are hereby exposed to condemnation; from which they cannot recover themselves by any duties they are capable of performing. Therefore, that salvation is not of works, but of free grace. That all that is done for us, or given to us, or wrought in us, or that we are able to do for him, is entirely of the free, rich and undeserved bounty of the great and blessed God; whom we have grievously offended by our iniquities, and who might justly consign us to punishment for them.

10. That God is loving, tender and compassionate, towards poor sinful men: and, in order to preserve his justice inviolate, to maintain the honour of his holy law, and the dignity and rectitude of his government, and yet to make condemned sinners everlastingly happy, he has brought in a new covenant; in which he has given his dear Son to be man's surety, to take our nature and place under the law which we have broken, and by which we are justly condemned; and to suffer for our sins. So that now, in perfect consistency with law and justice, with honour to his government, and all his glorious perfections, he can and does treat with mankind on a new foundation, in away of free grace; and can now be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

11. I believe, that, in our stead, Jesus has, by dying for us, made reconciliation for our iniquities, brought in everlasting righteousness, and provided a complete and free salvation for miserable sinners, and for all sinners without exception.

12. That this glorious salvation, with all the various blessings contained in it, is plainly revealed in scripture, and proclaimed to the world in the gospel, accompanied with such invitations and promises, directions and threatenings, as are directly calculated to answer the purpose and suit the circumstances of fallen men; to allure and incline the will as a rational appetite, and to beget the fallen soul anew, and bring it home to God; to dispose it to the practice of holiness, and conduct it to the possession of real, present, and everlasting felicity

13. That repentance, regeneration, and holiness in heart and life, are absolutely necessary in order to prepare the soul for salvation and eternal glory. But that faith in Christ and that only, or the believing of the gospel, entitles poor sinful mortals to every part of happiness.

14. That the Holy Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word which exhibits the free salvation of Christ, works on the minds of sinners to bring them to God, and to the enjoyment of salvation by Jesus Christ: that the word accomplishes this blessed purpose wherever it takes place and is cordially received: and that pardon, righteousness, comfort, strength, and every other spiritual blessing are, in this way, communicated to man.

15. As God now treats with men on this new foundation, both reason and scripture shew, that, though man is exposed to condemnation as a transgressor of the law, yet the condemnatory sentence is not executed upon any man, where the word is enjoyed, for breaking the law only, but for neglecting and rejecting the gospel and the salvation exhibited to us in it. In other words, men are now condemned and consigned finally to endless misery, because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

16. That God has chosen or appointed, from the beginning, that believers should be saved and that unbelievers should be damned. Hence, in the New Testament, believers are called Elect; and unbelievers, Reprobate. These are not chosen because they are holy, but that they may be holy. The scripture does not say, that they are chosen to faith, but through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. As God foreknew all things,

therefore this choice was made according to his foreknowledge: and, this is what I understand by the election of grace.

17. That true believers receive the Spirit by faith; by which they are regenerated or renewed and hereby, not only are constituted the heirs of God; but, in a measure, made conformable to him in their minds; and so are from that time meet for glory. Yet they ought to grow in grace; and, by activity in all holiness, to be laying up treasure in heaven, where they shall, of free grace, be rewarded according to their works.

18. I believe, that the saints ought to be subject to civil magistrates, according to the constitution and laws by which they are governed in all civil matters; but in matters of religion, they are to pay regard to none but Christ.

19. That a gospel church is a community of faithful persons, who are voluntarily united in christian love, to support their Redeemer's interest upon earth, and make it their great concern to proceed according to the best of their capacity, according to the rule of the New Testament, and those rules only: rejecting opinions and traditions of men, and hearkening diligently to the voice of their great Master who is in heaven.

20. That Jesus, our great Saviour and Master, has appointed two special ordinances, or positive institutions, to be observed in his church. These are Baptism and the Lord's-supper: the former to be performed only once; but the latter, as often as can be made convenient: and both are to be continued in the church to the end of time.

21. That Baptism is designed to be a standing memorial and emblematical representation of the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of our recovery from a death in sin to a spiritual and holy life by him; and also to denote our surrendering of ourselves up entirely to his service. That the only scriptural way of administering this ordinance, is to immerse the person in water: and the only scriptural subjects are those that repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

22. That the Lord's-supper is a solemn eating of bread and drinking of wine together, as a memorial or emblematical representation of our blessed Saviour's sufferings for our sins, and the refreshment and spiritual nourishment that his sufferings administer to the souls of true believers: and that believers only are the scriptural subjects of it.

23. That there is a fixed time approaching, known only to God, when all the dead shall arise from their graves, and shall stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, who is appointed of the Father to judge the world in righteousness; and will be seated on a glorious throne for that purpose. That this judgment, and the rewards or punishments consequent upon it, will be according to our works: that those who died in a state of sin and neglect of God, will be sent to everlasting punishment; but the righteous received to life eternal. That every man will be judged, and rewarded or punished according to the dispensation he has lived under, and that revelation of the will of God with which he has been favoured on earth. Those who have sinned without law must perish without law; those who have sinned in, or under the law, must be judged by the law; and all those who have had the

use of the New Testament, will be judged according to the gospel. That the wicked, under every dispensation, will be punished in proportion to their wickedness; and the righteous rewarded according to their righteousness.

24, That when this awful and tremendous scene shall be closed, the two grand classes of mankind, the wicked and the righteous shall be sent to their own places, in which they shall eternally remain. The wicked must be everlastingly tormented with the devil and his angels, as they have in this world imitated them in sinning against the God of heaven and earth; and must for ever groan beneath the vengeance of that God against whom they have rebelled: while the righteous shall be eternally happy in the kingdom of their Father and Saviour. For they are then made kings and priests unto God, and shall reign with him forever.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

Page 162.--A few particulars respecting the early history of the General Baptist church in Friar-Lane, Leicester, having been recently communicated, we insert them here, to preserve them from oblivion.

The origin of this society cannot be traced. The deed of conveyance of the premises, which were afterwards used as a meeting-house, is dated Aug. 8th. 1719. They were consigned, by Elias Wallin, to T. Davye, W. Arnold and S. Durance, in trust, for the congregation of Baptists at Leicester. An annuity of four pounds ten shillings, was, for a few years, imposed on them; but this was soon relinquished in favour of the pastor. Mr. T. Davye, who appears at this time to have been the pastor, was an attorney by profession: a man of considerable abilities and great piety. In 1719, he published a work intitled; "The Baptism of adult Believers only, asserted and vindicated; and that of Infants disproved." This is a well written piece and discovers extensive reading--Mr. Davye was succeeded in the pastoral office by Mr. W. Arnold; who was elder in 1750, when the number of members was twenty-four. After his decease Mr. J. Johnson laboured for them during a few years. Mr. S. Durance afterwards was the minister; but the cause declined under his care. After the death of Mr. Durance, Mr. Green, of Earlshilton, and several neighbouring ministers preached occasionally for this people. But their number diminished, and the cause was on the eve of dissolution, when a revival took place, as recorded in the work.

In the early part of the last century, several members of this society embracing calvinistic sentiments, left its communion, and laid the foundation of the particular baptist interest in Leicester. There was a kind of association maintained, for some time, by the General Baptist churches of Leicester, Earlshilton, Mountsorrel and Wimeswould, Smeeton and Knipton.

Page 203. Note*--The amount of the money collected by the friends at Church-Lane towards building the meeting-house at Leicester, is highly incorrect. Mr. Deacon had paid a visit to Kent, &c; and as the building was not then begun, he was advised to place the proceeds of his journey in the public funds. This was done in the name of one of the

deacons at Church-Lane; who, with a laudable concern for the security of the property, made an entry of the purchase in the Records of the church, in. such a style as led the author to conclude that the whole sum had been collected in London. The Leicester friends have kindly corrected the mistake: it seems that the contributions of the society in Church-Lane did not much exceed twenty pounds.

Page 352.--The term "assistant minister" is here improperly applied: as it appears that here was no other minister at Friar-Lane during any part of the time when Mr. Wood laboured for that society.

Page 366.--The room at Duffield, which was first fitted up for preaching, was not hired; but gratuitously provided by Mr. Taylor, that his neighbours might hear the gospel of salvation.

Page 409.--We are sorry to learn that the design of building a meeting house at St. Ives was, owing to some unexpected difficulties, abandoned; and that the church continues to assemble in the old inconvenient place of worship. The confident language used in the sixth case of the case of the Minutes for 1806, caused this misapprehension.

Page 418.--The meeting-house at Bourn was repaired in 1800, but not enlarged.